

Sport, Recreation and the Workplace in England, c.1918 – c.1970

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Abstract:

Over the fifty years from the end of the First World War, the experience of work in England was increasingly shaped by a concern for industrial welfare which manifested itself in various forms. Large-scale employers, in both the manufacturing and service sectors, often saw the provision of sports and recreational facilities as an important aspect of their commitment to industrial welfare and as a way of maintaining harmonious industrial relations. Sport, along with various recreational activities, increasingly provided a way of encouraging workers to identify with their employer; it was as important in this respect as the company outing or the annual dance.

This thesis seeks to build on the existing historiography relating to the 'sports and social' side of corporate industrial welfare. Whereas historians to date have focussed on single companies or on a particular sector, it examines four separate case studies – two (Robinsons of Chesterfield and Raleigh of Nottingham) located in the manufacturing sector and two (Lyons and the Bank of England) located primarily in the service sector – to provide an account of this aspect of industrial welfare that is cross-sector in its scope. Company magazines, which played an important part in sustaining clubs and societies by publishing their activities, are the principal primary source used in each case.

While underpinning previous work which has emphasised the commitment of employers to industrial welfare, it is argued here that workers themselves had an important part to play in the making of sports and social provision in factories and offices and other places of work, such as the catering establishments and hotels run by Lyons. Often the role of management was simply to respond positively to suggestions made by employees, providing the strategic support that enabled an activity to take off and then sustain itself. In all four case studies here the day-to-day organisation of particular activities was usually undertaken by interested employees. Thus, the characteristics of works-based recreation in a particular workplace could be shaped as much by 'bottom-up' initiatives as it was by 'top-down' directives.

This especially applied to the numerous hobby or interest-based societies – amateur dramatic societies, camera clubs and horticultural societies, for example – which were an important feature of works-based recreation. It is argued here that the importance of such activities has been underestimated in studies to date. They have attracted less attention than company commitment to sport, for example, which manifested itself in the provision of expensive facilities. Yet, clubs and societies which could appeal to employees beyond the age at which most were likely to engage in sport were a relatively inexpensive way of extending the reach of an organisation's welfare strategy. Accordingly, they are given substantial coverage here.

List of Abbreviations:

Abbreviation:	Full Title:
<i>AAA</i>	Amateur Athletic Association
<i>BoEA</i>	Bank of England Archive
<i>BESFVH</i>	Bank of England Staff Fund for Voluntary Hospitals
<i>BHS</i>	Bank Horticultural Society
<i>CCL</i>	Chesterfield Community Library
<i>DCRO</i>	Derbyshire County Records Office
<i>IWS</i>	Industrial Welfare Society
<i>LAC</i>	Lyons Athletic Club
<i>LC</i>	Lyons Club
<i>LLA</i>	Library & Literary Association
<i>LMA</i>	London Metropolitan Archive
<i>MRC</i>	Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
<i>NCL</i>	Nottingham Central Library
<i>NCRO</i>	Nottinghamshire County Records Office
<i>OD&OS</i>	Operatic, Dramatic & Orchestral Society
<i>RAC</i>	Raleigh Athletic Club
<i>RAFC</i>	Raleigh Athletic Football Club
<i>RAODS</i>	Robinsons Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society
<i>RASC</i>	Raleigh Athletic Social Club
<i>RSC</i>	Raleigh Social Club
<i>RWSSC</i>	Robinson Works Sports & Social Club

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It was during the 1970s when I used to watch my dad play in various local football leagues in Leicestershire that my interest in works sport and recreation was formed. Visiting works sports grounds that offered some of the best pitches and off-field facilities in the county was an impression that stuck with me into adulthood. With this in mind then I gained a place on the MA Sport History and Culture course at De Montfort University where my final year dissertation was the launch pad for PhD study.

Research can be a solitary and very time consuming activity however the assistance and friendly nature of all the staff at the various archives, libraries and records offices have made this a less onerous task. Additionally, the time and consideration shown to me by both Terry Radford and Barry Hoffmann in offering oral testimonies was vitally important to this study. I thank them all.

Most importantly, however, I have a huge debt of gratitude to my family. My parents have offered emotional and financial support in equal measure not only through my time as a postgraduate student but throughout my life. My two sisters have also been a considerable source of support. Finally, the two most important people in my life my wife Elaine and son Harvey. Without the support of Elaine this thesis would not have been possible. She has sacrificed a great deal of time and energy in supporting my ambition to complete this study and has been a source of unending encouragement. While the frequent games of football in the garden with Harvey have been welcome distractions from the monotony of keyboard writing.

Chapter 1

Introduction

*The directors of the Raleigh Company learned long ago that good relations with the workers inside the factory and the office are the basis of all successful business. They realised that if they took an interest in their employees, then the employees would take an interest in their work. So they started many years ago a social and welfare service for their employees that ranks with the best in the country.*¹

The extract above, taken from an in-house history of Raleigh Bicycle Company, represents a sample of the rhetoric which prevailed in many established manufacturing companies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. It also points to an intriguing and challenging arena in which to research aspects of recreational activity that bridge both work and play. Such was the growth of workplace-based recreation that company-sponsored sports and social provision became firmly embedded in the paternalistic culture of predominantly family-run firms of the period up to the end of the First World War. Between 1918 and 1939 and in the post-war years, it was subsumed under the umbrella of 'Industrial Welfare', which covered a range of activities undertaken by companies with a view to ensuring that

¹ *Seventy-Five Years of "Raleigh" Bicycles, Raleigh Bicycle Company* (Nottingham: Raleigh Industries Limited, nd), p.9.

workers stayed healthy and to encourage them to take a positive view of their employers. Questions around company paternalism, labour relations and welfare capitalism have seen a body of academic work that locates company-sponsored leisure in the wider field of company and organizational culture. Economic and business historians, along with those primarily concerned with industrial relations, have looked at work-based recreation provision primarily in relation to the history of the firm and the growth of the corporate economy more generally.

However, there are limits to what has been achieved. Firstly, the emphasis to date has been largely on the manufacturing sector. The service sector – including areas which fall within the public sector – has only recently begun to attract attention. One effect of this has been to make it difficult for historians to make cross-sector comparisons. Secondly, though there is a significant body of work on sports and social provision up to and including the Second World War, the post-war period has received significantly less attention. Thirdly, most of what has been written has looked at this important aspect of industrial welfare primarily from the point of view of the provider; it has been studied as an aspect of corporate development or company policy. There have been few attempts in this context to look at those who were provided for and this ‘top down’ approach tends to exclude them from view.

It might be added that there have been few studies which have made connections between the work of business historians with that of historians of sport and leisure working within the expanding field of cultural history in recent years. Business history and sports history have tended to develop on parallel lines. In business history, the emphasis is increasingly not simply on the firm itself, but on the environment in which it operates and

the culture in which it is embedded. Similarly, sports historians have become more preoccupied than they once were in locating sport in a wider context, be it economic, political, social or cultural. At one time the idea that sport 'has nothing to do with anything else' seemed to prevail, but this is no longer the case and opportunities to draw productively on work across both sub-disciplines should be explored.² The aim of this thesis is thus to make a timely intervention that is not wholly confined to a single sub-branch of historical enquiry but which draws on a variety of historical perspectives and relates to a number of academic fields. Scholars from disciplines ranging from business history to industrial relations and the study of sport and leisure will find here further evidence to the advantages of using sport and recreation as a lens through which to view culture and society more generally.

The principal theme of this study is essentially that which Simon Phillips addressed in his work on the Boots Pure Drug Company. It is concerned not only with the question of 'How people work?' or 'How people play?', but also with 'How people play at work?'³ In seeking answers to these questions two lines of inquiry have proved particularly useful. Firstly – and this is especially important when examining the origins of work-based sport and leisure activities at particular firms – more attention than before has been given to grassroots initiatives, where the initial spark of interest appears to have come from the employees rather than the employers, though of course this often prompted management to respond sympathetically. This has helped to open up the middle ground where 'bottom-

² See D. Porter, 'Entrepreneurship', in Pope, S.W. and Nauright, J. (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Sports History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp.202-5.

³ S. Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at Boots Pure Drug Company 1883-1945', (PhD. thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2003), pp.4-5.

up' meets 'top-down'. Secondly, where sports historians have examined work-based activities they have tended to focus solely on sport and especially on the relatively high-profile sports of cricket, football, hockey and athletics for which companies often provided expensive and highly visible facilities that also served the purpose of advertising their role as 'good' employers in the communities in which they were located. Arguably, large capital outlay on playing fields and pavilions, for instance, has skewed attention in the direction of sport at the expense of other less strenuous leisure pursuits which may have had a wider appeal, for example, to women as well as men and to older less physically active employees. 'The life of the club', Jeffrey Hill has observed, 'is one of the untold stories of modern British social history', though it is clear that there was a long tradition of working-class club membership, especially amongst men.⁴ From the late nineteenth century onwards the workplace was where many clubs and societies were to be found and it seems more useful to approach them as a whole. A firm's 'sports and social' side usually embraced activities such as amateur dramatics, gardening and photography – not to forget outings and company 'dos' of all kinds – as well as various sporting pursuits. It is important to locate company sport in the context of provision for leisure activities more generally.

The period covered by this thesis, c.1918–c.1970, along with the organisations that provide the case studies (which are considered in more detail later in this chapter) has been carefully chosen. Robinsons and Raleigh, light manufacturing companies both based in the East Midlands, Lyons and the Bank of England, essentially of services, and both based in the South, were located within classic growth sectors in the interwar period and on into the 1950s. The economic environment in which they operated, therefore, was one in which it

⁴ J. Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.144.

was important to develop effective recruitment and labour retention strategies in which the provision of recreation facilities came to play an important part. From the end of the nineteenth century through to 1945, as Simon Phillips has shown in relation to Boots, there was 'a gradual integration of welfare from an incidental adjunct to the workplace to an integral part of the management process.'⁵ The chosen case studies permit an exploration of this development over the years to 1945 in a variety of contexts and facilitate comparisons between the manufacturing and service sectors.

Similarly, even though company sports and social provision and industrial welfare generally were a key feature of the inter-war period, there are compelling reasons for extending the range of this dissertation into the post- Second World War era and through to c.1970. In the post-war period, management strategies incorporating recreational provision were no less important than they had been in the 1920s and 1930s but they had to take into account the cultural and social changes that came with increasingly widespread affluence. By the late 1950s, workers in both the manufacturing and service sectors were enjoying rising disposable incomes that enabled them to buy into sports and leisure activities of their choice. 'Most of our people', as Prime Minister Harold Macmillan pointed out in his celebrated speech at Bedford in 1957, 'have never had it so good'.⁶ As ownership of television sets and private cars increased and holidays abroad became more affordable, shop-floor workers and clerical staff could exercise a greater degree of choice as to how they spent their leisure time. As they became more independent financially a company's

⁵ Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at Boots', p.6.

⁶ See D. Kynaston, *Modernity Britain: Opening the Box, 1957-59* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp.55-6; D.

Porter, "'Never-Never Land: Britain under the Conservatives 1951-64', in N.Tiratsoo, ed., *From Blitz to Blair: a New History of Britain since 1939* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), pp.118-20.

employees were less likely to be attracted to the kind of works-based recreational provision that had been such a feature of the 1930s and 1940s. At the same time, the *ad hoc* paternalism which had given shape to the industrial welfare strategies of the inter-war period was receding. In these circumstances both the provision and take up of workplace recreation of all kinds were affected and the industrial relations climate generally became less benign before deindustrialisation became established in the early 1980s.

Context

It is important to establish a sense of the context in which the development of workplace sports and leisure activities took place over the long period from the end of the First World War to the 1970s. After a short-lived post-war boom, Britain's economy began to experience difficulties in the early 1920s; unemployment levels began to rise and remained at a relatively high level right through until the Second World War, peaking at around 2,750,000 in 1932.⁷ It might seem that this was not a climate conducive to growth in workplace sport and social provision. However, the overall picture was quite complex and characterised by marked regional variations and differences between the industrial and service sectors. Whereas old industries – especially the nineteenth-century staples of coal, cotton, iron and shipbuilding – were in decline in the interwar years, new industries – especially those manufacturing consumer goods like cars, electrical products and consumer goods – were expanding. 'The shift of resources in Britain between the wars from the old to the new industries' as Sidney Pollard helpfully observed, '... had important consequences on the well-being of different sections of the population'.⁸ The service sector, broadly defined

⁷ A. Briggs, *A Social History of England*, (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), p.288.

⁸ S. Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy 1914-1990* (London, Edward Arnold, 1992), p.123.

to include banking and finance, retailing and distribution, transport, tourism and a variety of other activities also grew. In the context of this study, it is especially significant that there was a rise in the numbers of those employed in sport, leisure and entertainment from 91,200 in 1921 to an estimated 247,900 in 1938. By the end of the 1930s the manufacture of sports equipment, games and musical instruments employed as many people as the fishing industry.⁹

While the difficulties of workers in declining industrial areas should not be underestimated, historians have come to recognise that it would be misleading to suggest that the poverty and unemployment that they experienced was typical of the country as a whole. Moreover, though economic conditions were particularly difficult at times, especially in the three years after the Wall Street Crash of 1929, there were some positive long-term trends which impacted on sport and leisure activities generally. Real wages increased over the period as weekly earnings rose and the cost-of-living declined and this led to an increase in living standards. According to Pollard, there was 'an appreciable rise in the standards of comfort and welfare of working-class families, particularly those in which wage-earners were in regular employment'.¹⁰ Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, in their survey of sport in the interwar period, underline the importance of this trend noting that growth in real wages meant that most families had more disposable income. This encouraged greater involvement in sport, 'but in a context of widening choices, such as more spacious houses, home improvements, electrical goods, cinemas and dance halls, or

⁹ S. G. Jones, *Workers at Play: a Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918-1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), pp.42-3.

¹⁰ Pollard, *Development of the British Economy*, p. 152.

even the motor cycle and car'.¹¹ These factors would have outweighed the effect of a negligible reduction of average working hours – down from 55 to 54 hours per week by 1937-8 - on the demand for sport and leisure activities, though there was a significant drop thereafter with manual workers averaging around 48 hours by 1945.¹²

Huggins and Williams have made the important observation that variations between regions were important in determining levels of engagement with sport. 'Many new forms of manufacturing, such as the motor industry', they note, 'were situated in the Midlands and the South-east, and sports in these areas attracted generally bigger crowds'.¹³ However, some other important changes were occurring suggestive of the emergence of an economic and social landscape moulded increasingly by consumer demand. For example, Fiona Skillen has made a convincing case for regarding the interwar years as 'a pivotal and transitional period during which traditional gender relations were challenged and re-negotiated'.¹⁴

The expansion of the service sector and the shift from heavy to light industries facilitated female employment and this meant that the proportion of women over 16 in the insured workforce rose slightly during the interwar years, from about 26 to 28 per cent. Though there were some important regional variations, about 70 percent of the female workforce was under 35 years old, as most women left paid employment after marriage,

¹¹ M. Huggins and J. Williams, *Sport and the English, 1918-1939* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.7.

¹² J. Benson, *Affluence and Authority: a Social History of 20th Century Britain*, (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005, p.144.

¹³ Huggins and Williams, *Sport and the English*, p.7.

¹⁴ F. Skillen, 'When women look their worst': Women and Sports Participation in Interwar Scotland', (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), p.1. Fiona Skillen's research is now available as *Women, Sport and Modernity in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012).

often because employers enforced a 'marriage bar'.¹⁵ Moreover, for those married women who stayed in work, one should be mindful that the majority of working wives had as little as two hours leisure per day which was 'usually spent shopping, taking the baby out, mending, sewing' and so on.¹⁶ Though women's wages continued to lag well behind that of male workers in this period, there was some improvement. A recent study of working-class life in Leicester has revealed, for example, that the gap between women's and men's wages in shoe manufacturing was closing; just before the First World War, women earned on average 56 per cent of the men's wage but this had risen to 67 per cent by 1935.¹⁷ Given that a working-class woman was likely to benefit from the general rise in working-class living standards that came with it, this modest improvement was significant and may well have been a factor in encouraging increasing female 'take up' of works-related sports and social activities, a key factor in driving participation upwards at this time.

This has to be seen against an expansion of recreation opportunities generally. For Martin Pugh, one of the key developments in interwar Britain was 'the emergence of a leisure-orientated society in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s' with various commercial interests investing heavily 'in a range of innovations including football pools, dance halls, luxurious cinemas and holiday camps'. In addition, what he calls 'domesticated forms of leisure', such as listening to the radio, family outings, home improvement and gardening,

¹⁵ P. Scott, *Triumph of the South: a Regional Economic History of Early Twentieth Century Britain*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p.191-4.

¹⁶ Jones, *Workers at Play*, p.59.

¹⁷ N. Newitt, *A People's History of Leicester: a Pictorial History of Working Class Life and Politics* (Derby: Breedon Books, 2008), p.118.

also flourished.¹⁸ There was, as Richard Holt has observed, a 'gradual move towards paid holidays'. Whereas only 1.5 million workers were entitled to holidays with pay in 1925 around four million benefited from them by 1937. Holt also argued that the vastly improved mobility, in the form of cars, buses and motor cycles underpinned the growth of holidays and leisure based excursions.¹⁹ Surprisingly, it was not only the seaside resorts of the British Isles that were patronised but also holidays abroad which were reported in 1935 to be 'coming gradually within the reach of workpeople'.²⁰ By the time that the Holidays with Pay Act of 1938 became operative, extending the benefit to around 11 million workers in total, 'Britain's new mass holiday industry stood poised to cater for millions of newly leisured workers and their families'.²¹

In these circumstances it was not surprising that trade unions and organised labour generally, despite the pressing issues of poverty and mass unemployment, were also increasingly concerned with leisure and recreation. Indeed, politics, leisure and recreation were often intertwined, as was demonstrated at the Leicester Labour Party's annual fund-raising gala day in 1928 where supporters gathered in the grounds of De Montfort Hall to engage in tug-of-war, tombola and fancy-dress competitions and were entertained by a

¹⁸ M. Pugh, *We Danced All Night: a Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London: Vintage Books, 2009), pp.216-17.

¹⁹ R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford, 1990, pp.197-99.

²⁰ H. Llewellyn Smith, *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, vol. IX, *Life and Leisure* (London: P. S. King and Son, 1935), pp.80-81.

²¹ S. Dawson, 'Working-class consumers and the campaign for holidays with pay', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18 (3), (2007), 303; see also Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, p.234.

dance band.²² A Workers Travel Association (WTA) had been founded in 1922, with the support of Labour politicians and trade union leaders, which aimed 'to contribute to internationalism and peace by enabling ordinary workers to visit foreign countries'. It had taken some 9,000 bookings for continental holidays by 1927.²³ On becoming president of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in 1938, Harry Elvin, leader of the National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers and a supporter of the WTA from the outset, mooted the idea of a Minister for Leisure.²⁴ Stephen Jones has surveyed the histories of the British Workers Sports Federation (BWSF), founded in 1923, and its rival, the National Workers Sports Association (NWSA), founded in 1930 after the BWSF fell under Communist control. Critically, in terms of the developments in industrial welfare covered here, he argues that the workers' sport movement in Britain was small when compared to those in many European countries, this was so because the British working-class 'were particularly adept at using commercialised and even bourgeois-controlled amateur sports for their own ends' via clubs based on pub, neighbourhood or workplace.²⁵ Robert Wheeler had previously underlined the significance of office and shop-floor initiatives in this respect; workers' sports organisations were themselves subject to pressure from below, particularly in relation to

²² Newitt, *People's History of Leicester*, p.123.

²³ S. Barton, *Working-Class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp.153-4; Llewellyn Smith, *New Survey*, pp. 80-1.

²⁴ Jones, *Workers at Play*, p.138.

²⁵ S.G. Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Class: Organised Labour and Sport in Inter-War Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 197-8.

the introduction of team sports.²⁶ It is important to recognise from the outset that British workers were accustomed to taking the initiative in relation to these activities.

It is also important to recognise that organised leisure and sporting activities came to play a part in the industrial relations strategies developed by British employers in the interwar period. Many of them joined the Industrial Welfare Society (IWS), established in 1919, which championed the use of works-based welfare provision and leisure activity as part of a progressive approach to industrial relations. Founded by Robert Hyde, who had served in the Ministry of Munitions Welfare Department during the First World War, the IWS sought to promote the cause of industrial welfare in the workplace generally and to encourage employers to establish suitable provision, including recreational facilities, for the formidable body of shop-floor workers in the post-war manufacturing sector. However, Robert Fitzgerald has argued, 'that the Industrial Welfare Society sought to protect managerial prerogative from the encroachments of labour'.²⁷ Certainly, its commitment to industrial welfare has to be seen against the difficult industrial relations climate of the period in which it was formed. Through its journal, *Industrial Welfare and Personnel Management*, the IWS sought to persuade employers to commit themselves to industrial welfare seriously by appointing full-time welfare supervisors, for example. Such appointments, according to IWS chairman Sir William Beardmore Bart in January 1920, were

²⁶ R. F. Wheeler, 'Organized sport and organized labour: the workers' sports movement', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (2), (1978), 197.

²⁷ R. Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management and Industrial Welfare, 1846-1939*, (London: Croom Helm, 1988), p.204.

one 'of the hinges of the door which opens to industrial contentment and efficiency'.²⁸ Though the pages of *Industrial Welfare and Personnel Management* supply essentially a managerial perspective its early issues provide a useful indication of the mood of more progressive employers in the immediate post-war years. It was certainly more successful in its efforts to persuade employers rather than employees. Stephen Jones makes the important observation that, despite promises made by the IWS, trade unions were suspicious of company recreation up until the late 1930s.²⁹

This strategy developed against a background of industrial militancy in the early 1920s which climaxed in the General Strike of 1926. The outcome of the strike and rapidly rising unemployment after 1929 weakened the trade union movement which only began to regain its former strength as economic recovery set in after 1934. 'Significantly', as John Stevenson and Chris Cook noted, 'the counter-attack on company unionism, new styles of working and pay cuts came with the revival of union membership'. Whereas the number of strikes was at its interwar low point at 357 in 1933, it then rose, peaking at 1,129 in 1937.³⁰ In these conditions, even if the strategy was rarely thought through systematically, the idea that works-based sport, leisure and welfare generally might improve the climate of industrial relations gained ground among employers. Huggins and Williams have underlined

²⁸ Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick [MRC]: Industrial Welfare Society archive, MSS.303/B19/1/2, *Journal of Industrial Welfare and Personnel Management*, January 1920, 29.

²⁹ Jones, *Workers at Play*, p. 149.

³⁰ J. Stevenson and C. Cook, *Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics 1929-39* (Longman: London, 1994), p.305.

this critical point, noting that 'company sports provision was often advocated as a means of achieving labour co-operation with management'.³¹

Carol Heim in her work on industrial reorganisation and regional development has offered the important insight that there was 'little reintegration of the depressed areas into the expanding portions of the economy'.³² The division between old and new industrial Britain helped to shape attitudes of both employers and employees alike. In the Lancashire cotton industry, for example, it was successful companies in the most buoyant sectors that tended to make provision for employee sport. Such companies tended to regard themselves as progressive and efficient. As industrial welfare expert J.G. Patterson argued in 1934, 'in as much as the employer is interested in industrial efficiency, he cannot afford to ignore the potential vitalizing effect of ordered and intelligently planned leisure occupation'.³³ Even in times of high unemployment employers learned that they could not always take the co-operation of the workforce for granted, as the eight-week stoppage at the Wolsey factory at Coalville (Leicestershire) in 1931 clearly indicated. Scott's groundbreaking research on the South of England has revealed that employers in the thriving sectors of British industry in the 1930s 'sought flexibility with respect to accepting new systems for machine pacing, payment systems and the simplification of tasks into narrow, repetitive operations'.³⁴ Yet, at the height of the unemployment crisis of the interwar years female workers at Coalville resisted the introduction of the American Bedaux 'speed-up' system and were promptly

³¹ Huggins and Williams, *Sport and the English*, p. 6.

³² C. Heim, 'Industrial organization and regional development in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Economic History*, 42 (4), (1983), 931.

³³ See Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Class*, p. 62.

³⁴ Scott, *Triumph of the South*, p. 180.

locked out. Financially supported by their union, the workers won significant concessions before agreeing to return to work. Their union secretary stated at the time that 'the whole of the country is watching Leicester'.³⁵ Thus it was a significant victory demonstrating that organised labour was still capable of finding its voice and resisting management initiatives. In these circumstances some employers were inclined to adopt a less abrasive approach to industrial relations. Jones is justified in arguing that 'industrial sports often aimed to foster smooth industrial relations, improve morale and make the workforce feel as though they were an integral part of the firm'.³⁶

The demands of the Second World War, often referred to both at the time and later as 'The People's War', brought further social and cultural change to the industrial workplace. With so many men serving in the armed forces, the war years saw a huge surge in female employment with many women taking up jobs that had previously been done by men, albeit at a lower rate of pay. 'By the summer of 1943', according to Angus Calder's authoritative history of 'The People's War', 'more than a hundred thousand railwaymen ... had joined the forces. A roughly equal number of women had joined the railways'.³⁷ In the munitions industry wartime expansion saw the number of women workers increase from 7,000 in 1939 to 260,000 by 1944. The proportion of women employed in engineering and vehicle manufacture increased from nine to 34 per cent over the course of the war, while in

³⁵ Newitt, *People's History of Leicester*, p.130.

³⁶ Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Class*, p.63; see also Tony Collins, *Sport in Capitalist Society: a Short History* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 89.

³⁷ A. Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), p.334.

commerce it rose from 33 to 62 per cent.³⁸ The 'depressed areas' of the 1930s were given a new lease of life as cotton, coal, shipbuilding and heavy engineering products were essential to the war effort though, as Pollard argued convincingly, aircraft manufacture, electrical and general engineering and the chemical industries, which had been growing rapidly before 1939, 'received the main benefits of expansion and modernization during the war'.³⁹ These initiatives, though state-led, were implemented by private-sector employers and workers and, once the changes were in place, it became difficult to retreat from the enhanced commitment to industrial welfare.

Of particular relevance to this study were the general improvements to factory working conditions as the state took the initiative in promoting industrial welfare. Ernest Bevin's appointment as Minister of Labour in Churchill's coalition government in 1940 was crucial here because he took the appointment 'on condition that he be allowed to take measures to improve the wages and conditions of the workers for whom he was going to demand extraordinary productive effort'.⁴⁰ The effects were especially noticeable in the increase in the number of doctors and nurses employed in industry. Whereas there were only 35 full-time and 70 part-time doctors in 1939, there were 181 and 890 respectively by 1944 and the number of industrial nurses employed grew from 1,500 to over 8,000. In addition, factory inspectors were given powers to compel larger employers to establish canteens and to encourage smaller firms to follow their example. Sometimes, as Pollard

³⁸ E. Hopkins, *The Rise and Decline of the English Working Classes 1918-1990: a Social History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), pp.68-9.

³⁹ Pollard, *Development of the British Economy*, p. 164.

⁴⁰ R. Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp.204-5.

explains, these changes were ‘demanded in the interests of efficiency, in other cases it was necessary in order to attract and keep workers in factories inconveniently sited’.⁴¹

Other initiatives with a view to maintaining morale in the factories, where long hours on repetitive production-line tasks was often expected, included BBC radio broadcasts, such as *Music While You Work* and *Workers’ Playtime* designed to bring an element of fun into the working day. Robert Mackay’s observation seems justified; ‘barriers to the idea of “background music” more generally were removed’.⁴² Again, this may have raised workers’ expectations. It was reported in March 1940 that girls in the gum department at a Rowntree sweet factory had made it known that they were ‘rather disappointed’ to be expected to work without music.⁴³ Again, the bar had been raised and workers were likely to become disenchanted if employers let them down. Workplace sport, primarily – though not exclusively - taken up by men in the pre-war years, was severely curtailed not only because sports grounds were often used for military purposes but because so many male employees were on duty elsewhere. In 1943 in *The Old Lady*, the Bank’s quarterly house magazine, the Bank of England Sports Club reported that it had ‘been unable to raise either a Rugby or Association Football side during the past winter’; the women’s hockey club was also struggling.⁴⁴ Yet we should be prepared to look beyond sport to other workplace-based

⁴¹ Pollard, *Development of the British Economy*, p.187; see also E. Hopkins, *A Social History of the English Working Classes 1815-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), p.262.

⁴² Mackay, *Half the Battle*, p.210.

⁴³ E. Robertson, M. Korczynski and M. Pickering, ‘Harmonious Relations? Music at Work in the Rowntree and Cadbury Factories’, *Business History*, 49 (2), (2007), 222.

⁴⁴ Bank of England Archive, London [BoE]: *The Old Lady: the Bank of England House Magazine*, XIX, (90), (June 1943), 76-77.

leisure activities. With the government encouraging vegetable growing on every available patch of ground, the Bank's Horticultural Society was flourishing and was 'dealing with more orders than ever before' for plants, seeds and fertiliser.⁴⁵

Historians of work-based sport and leisure provision have tended to underestimate the importance of the Second World War as a significant landmark, failing to reflect on the dramatic change in workplace culture which it brought about. Perhaps this is because the changes instituted in wartime were initiated by agencies of the state rather than progressive employers or assertive unions. Furthermore, the Beveridge Report of 1942 and the establishment of the welfare state after 1945 ensured that the provision of sport and other leisure activities at the workplace was now taking place in a different context, not least because of the commitment to deliver full employment as an aim of economic policy. By the start of the 1980s economists and economic historians had become obsessed with the failure of British business to compete effectively with rivals in faster-growing economies such as West Germany, The United States and Japan. Richard Coopey and Peter Lyth were largely justified in observing that:

Historians have pointed the finger at the failure of owners and managers to invest in new technological processes, or the failure to provide systematic engineering and scientific education geared to industry; they flagged up the duality of the British economy – the gentlemanly capitalists and the City bankers with no interest in the grimy industry of the 'north'; they pointed to the institutional inertias ranging from entrenched management practice to recalcitrant trade unionism ...

⁴⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1943, 76.

It is now often suggested that we were misled by looking at British industry from this 'declinist' viewpoint, which reflected the economic pessimism of the 1970s and early 1980s. As Coopey and Lyth point out, new sectors and leading firms had emerged 'even in the depths of the interwar depression', and there were similar success stories to report once Britain had made the transition from war to peace in the late 1940s.⁴⁶

In relation to the provision and take-up of workplace-based sport and leisure activities it is important to note that some trends evident before the war re-emerged after 1945. Arthur Marwick made the astute point in his social history of post-war Britain that work was a 'curse by which almost all human beings are afflicted' whilst remaining 'the activity through which most people establish their identity'. Significantly, he concluded grimly that 'it is the activity which fills the largest slice of any person's time between birth and death'.⁴⁷ Happily, the number of hours spent working, having risen in wartime, fell during the post-war period, albeit rather slowly, thus re-establishing a long-term trend that Benson traces back to 1900.⁴⁸ The average actual number of hours worked weekly, according to Pollard, declined from over 46 in the early 1950s to 44.3 in 1967-8 and fell further to 42.6 by the mid-1970s. Over the same period the typical holiday period doubled in length.⁴⁹ At the same time, rising disposable income meant that people had more money to spend on non-essentials. 'As incomes rose in twentieth-century Britain', Benson has

⁴⁶ R. Coopey and P. Lyth, 'Introduction', in Coopey, R. and Lyth, P. , (eds.), *Business in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁷ A. Marwick, *British Society since 1945* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2003), p.89.

⁴⁸ Benson, *Affluence and Authority*, p. 144.

⁴⁹ Pollard, *Development of the British Economy*, p. 291; see also D. Sandbrook, *White Heat: a History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), p.184.

pointed out, '... so the proportion spent on staple foods tended to fall'.⁵⁰ Taken together, the reduction in working hours and increased spending power provided additional opportunities for leisure and recreational activities, both inside and outside the workplace. This is indicated, to some extent, by the amount of page space devoted to sport and social activities in company magazines. As early as 1950, for example, *Sparks*, the house magazine for Marks & Spencer, devoted twenty of its 38 pages to the recreational and social activities of its workers.⁵¹

Though David Jeremy has warned that it is important not to exaggerate the rapidity of the shift from old to new industries and from the industrial to the service sector which had taken place by 1970, there is substance in Marwick's claim that it was in the 1960s that 'the new industry superseded the old'.⁵² One important feature of industrial development in the 1950s and 1960s was an intensification of the pre-war trend towards greater concentration of firms, especially in manufacturing. Pollard supplies convincing evidence that by the early 1970s large enterprises increasingly predominated; 45 per cent of workers in the sector were with firms employing more than 5,000 people and almost 60 per cent worked in plants employing more than 500. At the same time, as firms got bigger they were less likely to be family-owned; 54 per cent of the largest manufacturing companies were family owned in 1950 but only 30 per cent in 1970.⁵³ All this had implications for the

⁵⁰ Benson, *Affluence and Authority*, pp. 31-2.

⁵¹ *Sparks: The House Magazine of Marks & Spencer Ltd*, Winter 1950, author's personal collection.

⁵² D.J. Jeremy, 'The Hundred Largest Employers in the United Kingdom in Manufacturing and Non-Manufacturing Industries, in 1907, 1935 and 1955', *Business History*, 33 (1), (1990), 94; Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, 92.

⁵³ Pollard, *Development of the British Economy*, pp. 253-55.

provision of works-based sport and leisure, especially in the problematic industrial relations climate of the period. Adrian Smith makes an important observation in relation to large manufacturing employers in Coventry in the early 1970s - where GEC employed 18,000 workers, Standard 14,000 and Alfred Herbert 7,300 - that it was 'no wonder that out of the city's 200 plus football teams, no less than 63 were playing in the Works League'.⁵⁴ A similar trend towards concentration was evident in the service industries where the 'sports and social' side benefited by having larger numbers of potential participants. At the Bank of England Sports Club in 1958, Mr Tapley, who had volunteered to run the 'B' XV for rugby, was reported to be 'recovering from the shock of having twenty-five players to choose from for the first game'.⁵⁵

The expansion of new industries and the service sector in this period opened up new opportunities for women's employment in the 1950s and 1960s. In an era of full employment – unemployment levels averaged about 1.5 per cent in the 1950s and two per cent in the 1960s – the demand for labour was such that the pre-war marriage bar disappeared. Whereas fewer than one in ten married women worked in the 1930s, approximately half were in employment in 1965. Jon Lawrence has recently suggested that this was 'arguably the greatest change of the post-war era, and the one most intimately linked to new working-class lifestyles'.⁵⁶ If anything, this understates the importance of this development. Their wages certainly boosted household incomes and helped to underpin the

⁵⁴ A. Smith, 'Cars, Cricket, and Alf Smith: the Place of Works-based Sports and Social Clubs in the Life of Mid-Twentieth-Century Coventry', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19 (1), (2002), 142.

⁵⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1958, 257.

⁵⁶ J. Lawrence, 'Class, 'Affluence' and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c.1930-64', *Cultural and Social History*, 10 (2), (2013), 287.

dawning affluence of the late 1950s and 1960s which Harold Macmillan had welcomed in his Bedford speech and which helped sweep the Conservatives to victory in the 1959 general election. It was no surprise in these circumstances that sociologists began to study 'the affluent worker' and the fact that members of the fast-growing Consumers Association quickly outnumbered those of the two major political parties suggested that an important threshold had been crossed.⁵⁷ The context in which works-related sports and leisure activities operated had now changed in that employees now had more disposable income than before and a greater degree of choice when it came to how to use their leisure time and long-established patterns of behaviour began to change. The advent of television – to be found in 91 per cent of British homes by 1971 – and the opportunities offered by car ownership had a major impact on attendance at the cinema and sporting events. 'Soccer's Missing Millions' became a sports page cliché at this time and other spectator sports which relied heavily on gate receipts – cricket, greyhound racing and rugby league, for example – were also in crisis.⁵⁸ Employers in this period were confronted by a powerful and well-organised trade union movement with over 13 million members in 1979, over half the occupied workforce, and the prevalence of industrial disputes – both official and unofficial – provided an incentive to find ways of keeping the workforce loyal, happy and contented. The workplace continued to provide a convenient and accessible location in which sport and social provision could flourish with sufficient employer and employee support but now had to compete with other attractions within the reach of the affluent worker.

⁵⁷ Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p.183.

⁵⁸ D. Porter, 'British Sport Transformed: Sport, Business and the Media since 1960', in Coopey and Lyth (eds.), *Business in Britain*, p.334.

Workplace Recreation and Leisure: Historiography

This section will explore the existing historical literature relating to workplace recreation, welfare and leisure provision. In doing so it will seek to locate and contextualise key features of the relevant historiography. Jeremy Crump's observation in relation to Coventry is important: '[the] practice of employers sponsoring their workers' leisure, whether in the form of annual outings or more frequent activities, was rooted far back in the nineteenth century, often as an element of work discipline or cultural regulation'.⁵⁹ This helps to explain why business historians have been the major contributors to date in this area of research. Much of the emphasis has been on paternalistic employers of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, such as Joseph Rowntree, Jesse Boot and William Hesketh Lever, often seen as benign father figures concerned with the welfare of employees at work and in their lives outside the factory. Their influence helped to ensure that welfare provision became part of what David Jeremy refers to as 'the managerial armoury of late-Victorian and early twentieth century employers'.⁶⁰ However, as John Griffiths has pointed out, enlightened paternalism did not always achieve the desired outcomes. 'Much is made of the caring paternalism at Port Sunlight', he observes, but there were often 'sharp divisions between workers and senior managers'.⁶¹ And yet relatively recent studies such as John Bromhead's largely uncritical account of George Cadbury's contribution to sport, tend to make a link

⁵⁹ J. Crump, "Recreation in Coventry between the Wars", in B. Lancaster and T. Mason (eds.), *Life and Labour in a Twentieth-Century City: the Experience of Coventry* (Coventry, : Cryfield Press, 1986), p.269.

⁶⁰ D. J. Jeremy, 'The Enlightened Paternalist in Action: William Hesketh Lever at Port Sunlight Before 1914', *Business History*, 33 (1), 1990, 58.

⁶¹ J. Griffiths, "'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy ...': the Rites and Rituals of Company Life at Lever Brothers", c.1900–1990, *Business History*, 37 (4), 1995, 34.

between the business success achieved by paternalistic employers and their concern for the welfare of their workforce. 'In the provision of recreational and sporting facilities', Bromhead argues, '... Cadbury's were leaders in the field', before going on to credit George Cadbury who 'contributed hugely to the development and flowering of sport and set new standards for the provision of sporting facilities'.⁶² Focusing on the paternalist giants of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, however, has tended to distort the picture to some extent with the result that the explosion of works-related recreational activity after 1918 has received less attention than it deserves.

Business historians have led the way to date in the study of company industrial welfare and recreation provision and Robert Fitzgerald's *British Labour Management and Industrial Welfare 1846-1939*, though published in 1988, remains the benchmark publication in this field. Surveying companies across a number of sectors Fitzgerald identified a significant 'connection between company size, management structure and industrial welfare'.⁶³ Fitzgerald also emphasised the correlation between industrial welfare and the growth of internal labour markets which helped companies to retain a core of loyal workers. He notes that the Edgar Allen Works was proud to reflect on the fact that seven of the fourteen members of its 1918-19 junior football squad were still with the company in 1956.⁶⁴ In subsequent work on the matchmaking firm, Bryant and May, Fitzgerald reached the important conclusion that the industrial welfare approach of employers, which had largely replaced nineteenth-century owner paternalism by the 1920s, was an expression of a company's obligation towards its employees and a recognition of 'the human dimension in

⁶² J. Bromhead, 'George Cadbury's Contribution to Sport', *The Sports Historian*, 20 (1), 2000, 107-109.

⁶³ Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management*, p.20.

⁶⁴ Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management*, p. 95.

industry', implying that business was not driven solely by the profit motive.⁶⁵ Many years later, the *Brymay Magazine* offered a glimpse of this 'human dimension'. News of various recreational and social events shared page space with profiles of individual members of staff, obituaries and wedding announcements, helping Bryant and May to build a corporate identity that encouraged workers to identify themselves with the firm.⁶⁶ Employers could regard labour as either a cost or an investment and the extent of their commitment to investment in works-based welfare and recreation was shaped by such factors as company size and structure, the use of technology, the state of the labour market and the strength of the trade unions.

Writing in the early 1980s, Helen Jones noted that 'historians have tended to ignore post-First World War developments'. In seeking to fill this gap she argued that it was generally large, well-organised and successful companies that adopted industrial welfare strategies in the 1920s. It seems likely that employers were motivated initially by the hope that industrial welfare provision would inhibit the growth of trade unionism but, as the 1920s gave way to the 1930s, she found that it was increasingly used as a means 'to attract labour, especially skilled labour'.⁶⁷ Crump's observations on Coventry's manufacturing industries in the interwar period underlined this important point. Thus, for a firm like Courtaulds, 'a more pressing problem, especially from 1934 onwards, was the need to

⁶⁵ R. Fitzgerald, 'Employers' Labour Strategies, Industrial Welfare and the Response to New Unionism at Bryant and May, 1888-1930', *Business History*, 31 (1), 1989, 60-1; see also 'Employment Relations and Industrial Welfare in Britain: Business Ethics versus Labour Markets', *Business and Economic History*, 28 (2), 1999, 167-8.

⁶⁶ *Brymay Magazine*, Spring 1967, author's collection.

⁶⁷ H. Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes and Industrial Relations in Interwar Britain', *Business History*, 25 (4), 1983, 61-2.

recruit and keep skilled labour'.⁶⁸ It was this imperative that increasingly underpinned the company's commitment to industrial welfare. Nevertheless, booming Coventry may not have been typical, and Jones concludes by drawing attention to the underlying economic uncertainty of the period and the pressure on profits faced by industry. In these circumstances cheaper welfare options, such as workers' canteens, found more favour with employers than 'plush recreational facilities', though this argument, which will be addressed periodically throughout the body of this thesis, tends to overestimate what many works-based social activities required - such as gardening clubs and reading clubs - for many needed little in the way of company sponsored facilities and equipment. Jones also makes a case for setting workplace-based developments in the wider context of increased provision of commercial leisure during the interwar years. This may have made works recreational schemes that much more difficult to promote though Jones underestimates the extent to which workplace recreational facilities were often superior to what could be provided elsewhere.⁶⁹ Moreover, Tim Claydon's study of provision at Pressed Steel, where sports and social facilities were established well before a works canteen was opened in 1937, underlines the important point that there were significant variations in the approaches of different firms.⁷⁰

Such variations may well have resulted from employers assessing the value of investing in industrial welfare and in activities that may not have appealed to all workers. Stephen Jones noted that textile firms such as the Great Lever Spinning Company and the

⁶⁸ Crump, 'Recreation in Coventry', p. 271.

⁶⁹ Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes', 72.

⁷⁰ T. Claydon, 'Trade Unions, Employers and Industrial Relations in the British Motor Industry, c. 1919 - 45', *Business History*, 29, (3), 1987, 311.

Musgrave Spinning Company allocated substantial funds to welfare, recreation and sport but also observes that 'only vague assumptions can be made that mill recreation was a factor ... in attracting and retaining contented workers'.⁷¹ For some employers it was probably an act of faith that they hoped would result in a beneficial outcome but could not be guaranteed. It is very important to take note of Helen Jones's point that not all workers were appreciative of company welfare schemes and that some were openly hostile.⁷² This critical observation is underlined in Nick Hayes more recent study of industrial welfare and manual workers. Hayes writes of welfare provision as a 'sugared pill' offered in an attempt 'to steal away workers' from competing firms.⁷³ He also concluded that in the construction industry where, in contrast to manufacturing, the workforce was spread over several sites, employers were less inclined to provide welfare and recreational facilities, and employees – especially as their work was often seasonal or entailed moving from site to site – were less likely to take them up,⁷⁴ thus highlighting the importance of variations from one industry to another. By the 1960s, it appears, large contractors in the construction industry were more inclined to offer potential employees inducements such as holidays, sick pay and annual increments, rather than invest in recreation provision for employees.⁷⁵ This is not to say that the building and construction industry did not engage with sport and social activity. However, short term contracts and the continual moving from site to site resulted in both a

⁷¹ S. G. Jones, 'The Survival of Industrial Paternalism in the Cotton Districts: a View from the 1920s', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 7, 1987, p.3, 10.

⁷² Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes', 71.

⁷³ N. Hayes, 'Did Manual Workers Want Industrial Welfare? Canteens, Latrines and Masculinity on British Building Sites, 1918–1970', *Journal of Social History*, 35 (3), 2002, 637.

⁷⁴ Hayes, 'Manual Workers', 641.

⁷⁵ Hayes, 'Manual Workers', 652.

lack of a convenient logistical base and a movement of different tradesmen that made effective organisation of industrial welfare difficult. The single-site workplace – factory or office or a combination of both - had clear advantages in this respect.

In comparison with workers in industry, the experience of those employed as what were once called ‘black-coated workers’ and then ‘white-collar workers’ – administrators, clerks, secretaries and typists – has been relatively under-researched. This thesis will attempt to redress this imbalance in relation to work-based sport and social provision. By far the most important contribution to our understanding of this aspect of the office-workers life to date is Michael Heller’s article on ‘Sport, Bureaucracy and London Clerks 1880-1939’. Heller makes the pertinent observation that one in ten of all working men in London by 1911 were clerks; this represented the capital’s highest occupational category. Moreover, office workers were often employed on an industrial scale with 2,700 at the London, County and Westminster Bank in 1909, 2,000 at the Holborn Bars headquarters of the Prudential Assurance Company in 1911 and 2,500 at the Railway Clearing House in 1914. Notably Heller argues that staff sports clubs were usually initiated not by the management but by the staff themselves, although management often assisted such ventures or responded positively when asked for help. He maintains that this model of staff initiation and management support was replicated in the organisational culture of many British bureaucracies.⁷⁶ Positive responses at management level were influenced by the idea that teamwork was important and that it could be developed, it was thought, if clerical workers participated in sport. In addition, in businesses where respectability was highly valued,

⁷⁶ M. Heller, ‘Sport, Bureaucracy and London Clerks 1880-1939’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (5), 2008, 581-82.

employers were constantly stressing the dangers posed by alcohol, gambling and prostitution and 'in this sense sport can be seen as a technique to control clerks both inside and outside office hours'.⁷⁷

Heller's work has influenced the scope of this thesis and in particular its attempt to survey workplace-based recreational provision across the manufacturing and service sectors. Simon Phillips's study of Boots Pure Drug Company, Nottingham, has also been influential in this respect. His observation that historical study of industrial welfare has been dominated by the factory/manufacturing sector - 'studies of the department store and retail outlet have alluded to few instances of welfarism' – provided a useful starting point when constructing the research programme underpinning this thesis.⁷⁸ It is important, Phillips suggests, not to see the experience of Boots Pure Drug Company in isolation, but to examine welfare provision in the context of other companies and as a part of a diverse mixture of recreational and sporting activities. In particular, he argues, attention needs to be focused on a diverse range of workplace environments including factories, offices and shops, and across both the private and public sectors.⁷⁹ This thesis seeks to respond to this suggestion by exploring organisations across both the manufacturing and service sectors.

Hill has observed that works-based recreational activities have been a 'relatively peripheral' concern for historians of sport and leisure.⁸⁰ Moreover, Heller has suggested that 'while sport in modern British history has enjoyed attention, the same cannot be said

⁷⁷ Heller, 'London Clerks' 602-604.

⁷⁸ Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation', p.32.

⁷⁹ S. Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation in Boots Pure Drug Company: Methodological Perspectives', *Business Archives*, 84, 2002, 9.

⁸⁰ J. Hill, *Sport, Leisure & Culture*, p.5.

for company sport.⁸¹ Even so a substantial body of work has built up over the years. A number of studies relating to the history of football have touched on workplace sport. Tony Mason in his groundbreaking *Association Football and English Society* has suggested that works football clubs could act as an incentive for some workers to join a firm.⁸² This was reaffirmed by Roger Munting in his study of the 'The Games Ethic and Industrial Capitalism' where he argued that 'games and other welfare ... were used to recruit and secure workers'.⁸³ However, the extent to which these incentives actually worked has to date eluded systematic exploration.

This may have encouraged other historians to switch attention away from employers to the workforce. Thus Dave Russell, commenting on a feature of workplace sport that has been noted by both Jones and Heller, observed 'that it is dangerous to assume that ... works teams were always based on an initiative from above, for many almost certainly resulted from grassroots approaches'.⁸⁴ Matthew Taylor, while pointing to the burgeoning number of works football clubs in late nineteenth-century Birmingham and Sheffield, urges caution in making assumptions about the extent to which these were actually promoted by employers; often, 'the precise nature of the link between firm and club is far from clear'. Some employers may have seized the initiative or provided

⁸¹ M. Heller, 'London Clerks', 580. See also S. Phillips, 'Fellowship in Recreation, Fellowship in Ideals': Sport, Leisure and Culture at Boots Pure Drug Company, Nottingham c.1883-1945, *Midland History*, 29, 2004, 107.

⁸² T. Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915*, (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p.28.

⁸³ R. Munting, 'The Games Ethic and Industrial Capitalism Before 1914: The Provision of Company Sports', *Sport in History*, 2 (1), 2003, 48.

⁸⁴ D. Russell, *Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995* (Preston: Carnegie, 1997), 16, see also Jones, 'Survival of Paternalism', 10.

substantial financial support 'but no doubt in certain cases the relationship was merely symbolic'.⁸⁵ Taylor's caution stands out in contrast to earlier assessments such as those supplied by Peter Burke in relation to workplace Australian Rules Football in early twentieth-century Victoria, in which he makes the important observation 'that the workplace was a convenient location ... around which to form teams' but he emphasises the importance of employer initiatives in this area. '[In] most cases employers initiated workplace football teams', not least to deter their workers from drinking and gambling and other bad habits.⁸⁶ However, it is revealing that Australian historians are themselves divided over whether workplace sport was essentially a 'top down' or 'bottom up' initiative. Burke's view essentially contradicted the line taken by Phil Moseley in 'Factory Football: Paternalism and Profits' twenty years earlier, where it is argued that Australian works teams in the years leading up to the Second World War merely 'borrowed the company's name', simply because it was 'what the workers demonstrably had in common'.⁸⁷

On balance, among historians of sport in modern Britain, the view that workers generally took the lead in organising works-based sporting activities tends to predominate. Richard Holt in his seminal *Sport and the British* (1989), makes the important point that there was a strong tradition of popular sporting culture which allowed the working class to distance itself from attempts by those who had authority over them to intervene, thus there was a resistance to 'top down' diffusion. He notes that 'adult workers were ... cautious

⁸⁵ M. Taylor, *The Association Game: a History of British Football* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), p.36.

⁸⁶ P. Burke, 'Workplace Football, Working-Class Culture and the Labour Movement in Victoria, 1910-20', *Labour History*, 89, 2005, 2-4.

⁸⁷ P. Moseley, 'Factory Football: Paternalism and Profits', *Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History*, 2, (1), 1985, 25.

about attempts from above to provide them with sports, especially when those efforts came from employers' and concludes confidently by stating that works' teams were usually run by the employees themselves with little or no support from the workplace owners or management.⁸⁸ Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew in their study of the relationship between sport and alcohol, strike a balance, implying that initiatives from both the shop-floor and the boardroom could be critical depending on the particular circumstances. Thus, at Tetleys 'by 1930 a sports club had been formed apparently by the employees themselves', while at Watneys, with a sports ground at Mortlake reputed to be as good, if not better, than those used by many professional sportsmen, the company's contribution in providing such a facility was critical.⁸⁹

For all this, however, one should be hesitant about drawing firm conclusions from these studies. Works surveying the history of football, or the history of sport more generally, or focusing on particular aspects of those histories for which workplace sport is of peripheral interest and importance, have their uses but are not designed to tackle the subject of workplace sports provision in great depth. They do indicate a broad consensus in favour of the contention that employees tended to take the initiative in organising sporting activities and that they enjoyed a fair degree of autonomy in doing so, though this thesis will show that such organisations often benefited from financial and moral support from company owners, chief executives and managers. Moreover, the focus on sport tends to exclude other activities that were often features of work-based recreation from the picture,

⁸⁸ Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp.135, 143, 152.

⁸⁹ T. Collins and W. Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Beers: A Cultural History of Sport and Alcohol* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p.43.

such as bridge, photography, gardening, drama or dancing. The intention in this thesis is to look at these activities alongside company sport as part of the same broad theme.

Another good reason not to rush to judgement is that the sports history literature relating to this theme tends to underline the complexity of workplace sport and recreational provision. For example, both Jeffrey Hill and Jack Williams have argued that during the interwar period certain workplaces exhibited more sports teams than others; they were more often found in coal mining and engineering than in the cotton industry.⁹⁰ Even within a single sector there were often considerable variations determined by local conditions and the fluctuating state of trade. Alan Metcalfe, in his work on football in the mining communities of East Northumberland before the First World War, concluded that 'when miners were working, teams thrived: when economic conditions changed, teams and clubs disappeared'.⁹¹ But if the economic climate is a factor to be taken into account exactly how did it make its impact on workplace-based clubs? Were recreational facilities sacrificed by employers faced with falling profits? Or was it that miners themselves were less likely to support such activities when on short-time or out of work? Significantly in this context, Steven Thompson in his paper on industrial welfare capitalism in the South Wales coalfields argues that though coal-owners have been demonized as heartless, self-serving tyrants, with no regard for local communities, they were instrumental in supporting cultural

⁹⁰ J. Williams, 'Churches, Sport and Identity in the North, 1900-1939', in J. Hill and J. Williams (eds.), *Sport and Identity in the North of England* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p.124.

⁹¹ A. Metcalfe, 'Football and the Mining Communities of East Northumberland, 1882-1914', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 5, 3, December 1988, p.278

activities and organisations including choirs, brass bands, and sports teams.⁹² A welfare fund, established by the Miners Welfare Act of 1920, was administered jointly by representatives of employers and the workforce and leading to the provision of recreational facilities, such as including children's playgrounds, parks, sports pitches, halls and institutes for the wider benefit of the community. Daryl Leeworthy has recently re-emphasised the importance of such schemes in the interwar period noting that at Ynysybwl, for example, the local coal-owner, Robert Thompson Crawshay, made land available at a low rent to be used for recreational purposes, though the local miner's lodge had to lobby hard to persuade him to make this gesture. Elsewhere, at Troedrihiw, near Merthyr, a recreation ground was laid out on land gifted by the Earl of Plymouth.⁹³ Though such initiatives might be said to fall outside the category of works-based provision narrowly interpreted, they underline the point that for many working-class men and women recreational facilities provided or underwritten by local employers were the only means of sport and social provision open to them. Munting argues convincingly that this form of recreational provision was not merely a branch of industrial welfare but often went 'beyond the factory into the broader community'.⁹⁴

Though these interventions were a way of generating good public relations they also indicated that there were perceived benefits in being regarded as a good employer, even

⁹² S. Thompson, 'From Paternalism to Industrial Welfare: the Evolution of Industrial Welfare Capitalism in the South Wales Coalfield', paper presented to the *Economic History Society*, March 2008, pp. 1-2, 12.

⁹³ D. Leeworthy, 'Workers Fields: Sport, Politics and Landscape in Inter-War South Wales', in J. Hughson, C. Palmer and F. Skillen (eds.), *The Role of Sports in the Formation of Personal Identities: Studies in Community Loyalties* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), pp. 21-27.

⁹⁴ See Munting, 'Games Ethic and Industrial Capitalism', 56-58.

when there was not much employment to offer. Industrial welfare generally seems to have provided a space where the interests of employers and workers could coincide with a degree of mutual benefit. This has been underlined by Adrian Smith's research on work-based sport in mid-twentieth century Coventry. Tracing his father's career in the car industry, Smith echoes Crump in arguing that 'here was a labour force cultivated by paternalistic – but rarely altruistic – employers eager to retain skilled and semi-skilled workers'. He then goes on to make the important point that up until the early 1970s an ever-expanding workforce underpinned the growth and longevity of workplace sports and social clubs in a city where there was a high demand for workers with engineering skills.⁹⁵ These comments echo Neil Tranter who noted in relation to the nineteenth century that a kind of virtuous circle was established whereby employers, in responding to workers' enthusiasm for sport, came to believe that they were creating a more contented, healthy and efficient workforce. At the same time, workers, aside from the fringe benefits of company-sponsored sport and leisure, found that they were better treated by management as productivity improved. Thus, even by the late nineteenth-century many employers had come to believe that there was a positive relationship between what employees did in their own time beyond the factory gate and how they performed when they were at work.⁹⁶ This all sounds rather straight forward with a good reputation and locally attractive sports and social facilities helping firms to attract staff of the right quality when they needed them. Jack Williams has made the significant observation that teams playing football in the Bolton Sunday Schools Social League had difficulty in retaining players 'tempted to works welfare

⁹⁵ Smith, 'Cars, Cricket, and Alf Smith', 137-142.

⁹⁶ N. Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 59.

teams because of their better facilities'.⁹⁷ All this suggests that it is important to view company welfare in a broader context. Better wages and working conditions, security of employment and opportunities for promotion were likely to be at least as, if not more important, than sports and social facilities when seeking to attract quality staff. The validity of comments regarding attracting skilled and semi-skilled workers will be tested throughout this thesis.

Fiona Skillen's recent groundbreaking research into the works-based leisure activity of women workers in interwar Scotland – aside from highlighting the important dimension of gender – provides a convenient way of summarising the current state of research into the place of company sport in the history of industrial welfare. Skillen suggests that there were four main reasons which explain the introduction of works-based recreation. Firstly, it was believed that welfare schemes generally instilled a degree of loyalty to the company and underpinned the idea that the company was a kind of family. Secondly, it is argued that the provision of company welfare – whether related to industrial health, social or sports activities – created a sense of dependency on the employer while re-emphasising the centrality of the firm in the lives of its workforce. Thirdly, improved physical fitness and teamwork, which it was thought company sport would help to deliver, were seen as likely to improve efficiency and therefore have a positive effect on productivity. Finally, Skillen argues that welfare provision – including sports facilities – could be used to generate sympathy for employers during times of industrial strife, especially when they were made available to the wider community. In addition, Skillen raises an important point when she observes that company sports were only one aspect of the industrial welfare recreational

⁹⁷ Williams, 'Churches, Sport and Identity', p. 124.

package, which might also include works outings, summer camps, educational activities and dances. Significantly, Skillen stresses that it was the attitude of the workforce rather than the policy of the management that mainly determined the longevity of workplace-based clubs and societies.⁹⁸ The strength of this important observation is largely supported by the case studies that follow.

Methods and sources

The literature review above has sought to provide a solid historiographical framework for the primary research in the chapters that follow. It has, in addition, identified some of the gaps in our understanding of the history of works-based sport and leisure activities that this work intends to address. Whilst this particular field of study has seen input from business historians and cultural historians with a particular interest in sport, none to date have compared the extent and experience of provision across sectors. The multiple case study approach to be followed has been designed to facilitate such a comparison while, at the same time, allowing consideration of development at each of the four businesses over a long period (c.1918-1970), from the immediate aftermath of the First World War to the end of what we might regard as the post-Second World War period in British history; from a period when industrial welfare provision of all kinds was fashionable with progressive employers to an era when workers – with more leisure opportunities to choose from than their predecessors – were becoming increasingly less inclined to take advantage of the ‘sports and social’ activities provided at the workplace. An advantage of surveying the provision of workplace leisure and recreation activities over a fifty-year period is that it is possible to trace the fortunes of individual clubs and societies over decades and assess the

⁹⁸ F. Skillen, ‘When women look their worst’, pp.130-31.

impact of factors such as the increasing availability of commercialised entertainment on the 'sports and social' aspect of work experience in factory, office and other settings.

Four case studies have been selected carefully to facilitate comparisons between different kinds of workplace. The Raleigh Cycle Company (Nottingham) and Robinson & Sons, Ltd (Chesterfield) represent manufacturing enterprises of different scale and scope, one set in a large city, the other in a rather smaller industrial town; the Bank of England (London) represents a quite different kind of organisation within the service sector employing large numbers of clerical staff, it also moves from private to public sector after the Bank was nationalised by Attlee's government in 1948. Finally, J. Lyons & Co (also in London), provides an example of a company whose factories, restaurants and retail outlets meant that the firm employed a wide range of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled staff across both the manufacturing and service sectors. Each of these businesses has been allocated a single chapter in order to permit serious consideration of the unique or particular characteristics applying to sport and leisure provision in each case while not losing sight of wider issues which apply more generally, such as class, gender, occupational hierarchy and industrial relations and occupational hierarchies within the workplace. This case study approach permits the investigation of wider issues within the particular context of firms located in particular sectors or, as in the case of Lyons, straddling a number of sectors. If the treatment of these issues is a little uneven across the case studies this simply reflects the different characteristics of employment in the four companies investigated. Questions relating to gender relations, for example, feature more prominently in the context of those based in the service sector simply because women were more often employed there than on the shop floor of a manufacturer such as Raleigh.

In part, the decision to focus on Raleigh, Robinsons, Lyons and the Bank of England reflects the strength of their company archives which in each case was sufficient to sustain interest and robust interrogation over a concerted period of study. This thesis has thus to a large extent been shaped by the archived primary sources that are available. In making use of this material, the researcher has to bear in mind the points made forcefully by Douglas Booth, for example, who has argued that some historians – sports historians in particular – have not paid enough attention to the wider social, cultural and political context in which archives are constructed and tend to see them as relatively unproblematic sources from which historical facts may be extracted.⁹⁹ Undoubtedly, some researchers may be unaware that the collections that have survived tend to reflect existing structures of power and accordingly have an inbuilt bias of some kind. It is important, therefore, to look beyond the official record – in this case the archive that the company has invested in – and to widen the range of sources wherever possible as a way of bringing in different perspectives. Thus, for example, the oral testimony of employees, newspaper reports and photographic evidence, have also been used here. As Martin Johnes, in a powerful reply to Booth has argued, however, this overstates the case. Historians are generally well aware that primary sources, whether archived or not, have to be approached with ‘a sense of caution’; few would start from the position that archives were simply ‘repositories from where truths can be simply retrieved’.¹⁰⁰ While making use of the extensive archives available for Raleigh, Robinsons, Lyons and the Bank of England the writer of this thesis has tried to exercise due caution, especially when using company magazines and other publications authorised by

⁹⁹ D. Booth, ‘Sites of Truth or Metaphors of Power? Refiguring the Archive’, *Sport in History*, 26, (1), 2006, 103.

¹⁰⁰ M. Johnes, ‘Archives, Truths and the Historian at Work: A Reply to Douglas Booth’s “Refiguring the Archive”’, *Sport in History*, 27 (1), 2007, 133.

management which might be regarded as subtle forms of propaganda designed to promote the idea that employers and employees were part of the same industrial family.

One feature of each of the four firms examined here is that they each produced a company magazine and that long runs of these publications have been archived. For historians who have previously researched in the field of industrial welfare and workplace-based sports, such magazines have proved invaluable. Phillips, in his work on Boots reached the conclusion that 'the most revealing source in uncovering recreational initiatives was the house magazine'.¹⁰¹ Munting made extensive use of the *Carrow Works Magazine* (Colemans), *The Works Magazine* (Boulton and Paul) and *Xylonite Magazine* (British Xylonite) and formed the view that they played an important role in the development of sport and recreation based at the workplace, not least because they signalled the management's approval for such activities while at the same time alerting employees to the opportunities that were available.¹⁰² Perhaps the most comprehensive rationale justifying the use of company magazines in this respect has been provided by Michael Heller who has linked their emergence in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century to academic inquiries concerned with 'human relations' in mass production industries employing large numbers of workers, often engaged in repetitive tasks. In these conditions it was important to find ways of motivating workers as well as minimising boredom and fatigue, factors which could have a negative impact on productivity. Thus humanising the workplace was at the heart of industrial welfare and sports and social provision was seen to have an important function. Works magazines played an important part in promoting recreational activities as

¹⁰¹ Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at Boots', p. 1.

¹⁰² Munting, 'Games Ethic and Industrial Capitalism', 56-58.

part of organisational culture, not least in providing information about the activities of various clubs and societies thus helping them attract new members.¹⁰³

Moreover, as organisations grew larger and employed more people, it became important to develop effective forms of communication of which the company magazine was one of the most important. Heller makes the important observation that ‘information is at the heart of any organisation’ and the magazine could be used to disseminate useful information – advertising new job opportunities within the company, for example, or giving notice of new work practices, as well as humanising the workplace through supplying news of promotions, retirements and marriages.¹⁰⁴ It is clear, therefore, that company magazines are central to this study. Establishing the fact that each of the four companies examined here addressed its employees via this medium was paramount in determining the selection of case studies. *The Raligram* (Raleigh), *The Link* (Robinsons) *The Lyons Mail* (Lyons & Co) and *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street* (The Bank of England) have all proved critical as sources of evidence for the development of social welfare and workplace sport and recreation in their respective contexts while, at the same time, serving as examples of how company magazines contributed to that process.

Understandably, the function of company magazines as ‘tools of propaganda’ or ‘sites’ where a sense of hierarchy could be re-enforced has often been stressed. This function notwithstanding, it is important not to underestimate their positive role in generating a

¹⁰³ M. Heller, ‘British Company Magazines: 1878-1939: the Origins of House Journals in Large-Scale Organisations’, *Media History*, 15 (2), 2009, 143-66.

¹⁰⁴ Heller, ‘British Company Magazines’, 155-56; see also Griffiths, ‘“Give my regards to Uncle Billy...: the Rites and Rituals of Company Life at Lever Brothers, c.1900-1990’, *Business History*, 37 (4), 1995, 28.

sense of community among workers and in encouraging individuals, departments and factories to take pride in their achievements at work. The very first issue of *The Link* in June 1918, claimed that the magazine was 'issued in the interests of the employees' and carried a message from the directors at Robinsons which referred to the creation of a 'serviceable link between Worker and Worker, Department and Department' as well as the larger objective of 'joining us together in rendering to the community in which we are placed'.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, as Heller has suggested, the company magazine, along with the various activities out of working-hours that it drew attention to, was critical in creating a sense of belonging and unity 'among individuals who would rarely meet'.¹⁰⁶ This importance of this function is also emphasised by John Griffiths, with reference to *Progress*, the magazine produced by Lever Brothers, who argues that its development as a medium of communication was of critical importance in the post-Second World War period when the company had a workforce of over 250,000 worldwide but also notes that it tended increasingly to be directed towards company executives rather than shop-floor workers.¹⁰⁷ This suggests that the house journal had the potential to be a flexible tool as far as management was concerned which could be usefully adapted to meet the requirements of changing situations. It was this flexibility that underpinned the longevity of these publications.

A variety of archive-based evidence has been surveyed to supplement the primary evidence derived from the magazines, notably company annual reports, minutes of meetings held by works-based sports and social clubs, club handbooks and advertisements

¹⁰⁵ Chesterfield Central Library Cultural and Community Services [CCLC&CS]: *The Link*, Company Works

Magazine, Robinson & Sons Ltd, June 1918, Front Cover, 052.51 3691.

¹⁰⁶ Heller, 'London Clerks', 590.

¹⁰⁷ Griffiths, 'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy', 28.

for dances, dinners, fetes, sports days and annual outings, as well as other ephemera relevant to the theme under consideration. Martin Polley has emphasised the importance for sports historians of club records. They are 'amongst the most basic primary materials of sports history, as they take us into the reasons for sport happening as it did'.¹⁰⁸ This is exemplified by the report presented in 1929 by the secretary of the Robinson Works Sports and Social Club (RWSSC) which thanked the company's directors for allowing the use of comfortable rooms at Bradbury Hall which facilitated the growth of the Men's Social Club, the Boys Club, and the Gymnasium and Ambulance classes.¹⁰⁹ This kind of material constitutes a primary source base that is both eclectic and rich in detail. Considered critically, it supplies a series of local contexts – each of the case studies has its own peculiarities – which help to ensure that explanations given for the development of works-based sporting and recreational activities are grounded in the actual experience of management and employees in as far as they can be reconstructed from the available evidence.

Oral history also has an important function in this respect as a source of evidence that provides vivid and personal insights into the everyday activities of those workers who not only participated in works recreation but who also were instrumental in the organisation and setting up of clubs and societies. Martin Polley has suggested that 'oral accounts can take us right into the grassroots of a sport, and tell us what it was like at club and individual level'.¹¹⁰ Principally, however, it has the advantage of opening up areas of inquiry that might otherwise be unavailable to the researcher. Significantly, Fiona Skillen, in

¹⁰⁸ M. Polley, *Sports History: a Practical Guide*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.100.

¹⁰⁹ DRO: D5395/7/4/1, Robinson Works Sport and Social Club [RWSSC], Secretary's Report for 1929.

¹¹⁰ Polley, *Sports History*, p.129.

her study of women's participation in works-based sport in interwar Scotland, observes that oral histories enabled her to glean information that was 'often absent from other traditional accounts'.¹¹¹ Though this thesis is not an exercise in oral history as such, the intention is to use the testimony derived from a limited range of interviews conducted by the author and from the collection of recorded interviews of former Raleigh workers held at the Department of Community and Culture, Nottingham Central Library. Oral testimony has its limitations; Eric Hobsbawm famously argued that personal memory was a 'slippery medium for preserving facts'.¹¹² Indeed, personal recollections of what actually happened twenty, thirty or forty years ago may be somewhat unreliable and the tendency to exaggerate or idealise has to be factored into any analysis of such evidence. However, there are compensating advantages in using such evidence, not least that it makes it possible for the voice of the worker who participated in workplace-based sports and leisure activities to be heard and thus provides a useful counterbalance to the official company-approved line to be found in the house magazines.

Neither has news of company affairs found in local and regional newspapers been neglected. Though some historians – and again sports historians have featured as a target of criticism – are perhaps over-reliant on the press as a source, it would be perverse to neglect it in this instance. Newspapers, such as the *Nottingham Evening Post*, *Leicester Mercury* and the *Derbyshire Times*, invariably took great interest in local firms, not least because they were a source of advertising revenue, and often supplemented the efforts of house magazines in disseminating company ideals. Additionally, newspapers could enhance a

¹¹¹ Skillen, 'When women look their worst', p.10.

¹¹² E. Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), p.206.

company's standing in the local community by reporting on charity events and other activities instigated in the interests of enhancing public relations. This has helped to ensure that that is a rich and various source of material at the disposal of researchers. The *Nottingham Evening News*, for example, regularly featured a column entitled 'Works Clubs Whisperings' which followed the progress of works football teams, such as Raleigh Athletic, Players Athletic, Stanton Ironworks and Trent Motors.¹¹³ Sometimes, newspaper reports shed important light on way in which works sport and recreation was organised. An item in the *Loughborough Echo*, for example, reported in 1947 that the Brush Works Sports Club (Football Section) had been invited to the home of Mr and Mrs V. J. Chalwin in Wymeswold, a village close to the Brush Works, noting that Mr Chalwin, a director of Tarrans Industries Ltd, of Hull, was a great supporter of Brush Sports and had played for both the football and cricket teams.¹¹⁴ Though brief, the article is not without significance. It reveals that 'outsiders' were sometimes allowed to play in company teams while also suggesting that a house party of this kind could form part of the schedule of entertainment related to works-based sport. In addition, it raises questions about whether Chalwin had a special relationship with the firm which would require further research to answer. It should also be observed that newspapers are also a rich source of photographic evidence featuring numerous photographs of works teams at play, annual outings and other events to supplement the visual representations to be found in company magazines.

The intention is to use the source material outlined above to explore key aspects of the provision of sports and social provision in single companies or organisations and thus

¹¹³ See, for example, *Nottingham Evening News*, 15 January, 1938, p.6.

¹¹⁴ *Loughborough Echo*, 16 May, 1947, p.2

within particular sectors of industry. The first aim is to provide an element of cross-sector comparison within the body of a single thesis. To date there has been little or no work which compares provision across sectors. The four case studies which form the focus of the chapters that follow have been chosen with a view of making such a comparison possible. The second aim is to provide an integrated view of sports and social provision. Historians – understandably if their primary concern has been with sport – have been inclined to focus on sports provision alone but it is argued here that football, cricket, hockey and netball, for example, are better understood in a wider context of recreational provision which includes amateur dramatics, horticultural societies and gardening clubs, along with events such as dances and works outings. One advantage of such an approach is that it is more likely to reveal how companies catered for all workers in this respect rather than those who were young enough to actively participate in sport, an activity which tended also to be of more interest to men rather than women, though this assumption will be tested where evidence permits. Thirdly, there will be an attempt to look at sports and social provision from the point of view of those who took it up. The emphasis, in contrast to the work of some historians which has tended to explain such provision principally as part of a management strategy to attract, retain and control labour, will be on the workers. Very often, as we shall see, management was responding to initiatives that originated on the shop floor and in the office. At the very least, the idea that sports and social provision was a simple ‘top down’ process needs to be reconsidered. Company literature and other related primary sources will be revisited with these aims in mind. In concluding this opening introduction the following section will provide a brief summary of the four case studies that form the body of this thesis.

Summary of Case Study Chapters

The first of the case study chapters is on the Nottingham-based firm of Raleigh Cycles who, along with firms such as Players and Boots, were one of a group of large employers in the city who competed in the same labour market for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Raleigh, like these neighbouring companies, invested heavily in sports and social facilities as part of an industrial welfare strategy. Though it is clear that some works-based sport and recreation was taking place in the early days of the firm at the end of the nineteenth century, the focus here is principally on their further development from the end of the First World War to 1970. The sports and social provision at Raleigh expanded particularly rapidly in the interwar period and remained a feature of Raleigh's company culture throughout. This was not simply because the company and the numbers of people it employed were expanding for most of this period but also because Raleigh's directors were happy to encourage activities which promoted physical fitness and social interaction and which helped to promote a positive image of the company. Some employees at Raleigh engaged with the firm's sports and social side fleetingly; for others, as the reflections of former employees reveal, membership of clubs and societies was an important part of their lives underpinning a lifelong attachment to their employer, even after retirement. As the research of other historians, especially Heller, has demonstrated, however, often the initiative to start a club or society came from the shop-floor, so in practice Raleigh's industrial relations strategy involved providing financial, logistical and other forms of support in the interests of promoting harmonious industrial relations and assisting in staff recruitment and retention.

The following chapter continues the focus on the manufacturing sector and looks at the Chesterfield-based company of Robinson & Sons Ltd. Here, the pattern of development was similar to that at Raleigh in that there is evidence of some works based sport and recreation before 1914 followed by a period of investment and expansion during the interwar years. Robinsons was an older firm than Raleigh and remained in family ownership and the industrial welfare strategy pursued seems to reflect a more paternalistic outlook. The Robinson family were a highly visible presence, both at the factory and in Chesterfield more generally where various members played a very active part in the civic life of the town. They were not content simply to hand out prizes and attend works outings but engaged directly with societies, especially the Operatic and Dramatic Society. It is sometimes argued that old-style, family-led company paternalism declined in the 1920s and 1930s but evidence from Robinsons would suggest that it continued to thrive in some places and that it continued into the post-1945 period. As at Raleigh, shop-floor initiatives were also important and this is highlighted with special reference to team sports; interdepartmental competition appears to have been especially important at Robinsons, widening participation among workers whose modest skills would not have seen them picked for a works team. As at Raleigh, some individuals were active across a range of activities which sometimes overlapped, while others engaged less frequently. Overall, however, though the style was more paternalistic the impact of sports and social provision at Robinsons served, as it did elsewhere, to promote deference, loyalty and acceptance of the existing workplace hierarchy.

Few workplaces could have had a more rigid and structured hierarchy than the Bank of England which provides the third case study and provides an opportunity to examine an

organisation based in the service sector. The main focus here is on the Bank's central headquarters in Threadneedle Street in the City of London and on its extensive sports and leisure facilities at Roehampton, several miles away in suburban South-West London. The Bank's employees were almost all 'white-collar' workers – sometimes called 'black-coated' workers in the Victorian period – who would certainly have regarded themselves as middle-class on account of their occupation even if they were employed at one of the low clerical grades. A university education, preferably Oxford or Cambridge, was a requirement for those entering at higher levels, and there was a relatively high proportion of entrants who came straight from public schools bringing an interest in sport with them. The Bank, as a key financial institution – in the private sector until 1946 and the public sector thereafter – had to compete for well-qualified recruits with the other banks, insurance companies etc that had their headquarters in the City; many of these offered excellent sports and leisure facilities and it was clearly seen as important that the Bank should match them, if only to maintain its own prestige as *the* central bank. Over the course of the twentieth century, the Bank began to employ more and more women, particularly in the clerical grades. The so-called 'white-blouse revolution' forced the Bank to open up sports and other recreational opportunities to its female staff, though to a large extent, these remained separate from those offered to men. The Men's and Women's Sports Clubs at Roehampton did not merge until 1970. For comparative purposes, some attention will be given, from time to time, to sports and social activities at the Bank of England's printing works which organised its own activities quite separately and on a pattern broadly similar to the manufacturing sector firms studied here. Class, along with gender, is critical to any understanding of the sports and leisure facilities that the Governor of the Bank of England and his directors were so keen to encourage.

The final case study chapter is concerned with the firm of J. Lyons & Co, a major employer which straddled both the manufacturing sector (food processing) and the service sector (catering). This chapter will help to demonstrate how the distinctive patterns of work in different parts of the Lyons organisation impacted on the provision and take-up of the extensive sports and social provision on offer. For example, though Lyons food processing workers put in regular hours in factories with large numbers of co-workers, the famous 'Nippies' (waitresses) employed in Lyons' high-profile tea shops and corner houses were employed in relatively small numbers at a large number of smaller workplaces which were widely dispersed. Moreover, often their working hours – especially evening and weekend working - made it difficult for catering workers to participate. High turnover of relatively low-paid staff in the tea shops and corner houses suggest that the industrial welfare strategy to which the firm's director were committed may not have played a major part in terms of recruitment and retention. Also – and here Lyons was like the Bank of England – the fact that the firm was located primarily in London meant that the sports and social facilities were relatively inaccessible to many of its employers living, for example, on the other side of the sprawling metropolis. *The Lyons Mail*, provides an accurate reflection of the pattern of sports and leisure activity at Lyons – women feature prominently, there is a good deal of activity initiated at shop-floor level, a significant amount of inter-departmental competition, and a falling off of interest in the 1960s, accentuated by the problems which the company was experiencing by this time, especially in catering. As at Raleigh, Robinsons and the Bank, the sports and social activity provided many opportunities for owners and senior management to make themselves visible; at Lyons members of the Gluckstein and Salmon families were no less assiduous in their attendance at works sport and social functions as their counterparts elsewhere. There was an element of old-style paternalism in

this but the size and complexity of the Lyons organisation meant that a more industrial approach dominated.

Chapter 2

Raleigh Cycle Company, Nottingham

*Along with Boots and John Player, it is (the) most important name in Nottingham's manufacturing history and, although all vestiges of the company have now been swept away from the city landscape, the memories refuse to fade. That is because Raleigh was not just the finest name in cycle manufacture anywhere in the world; it was a community that covered all spheres of Nottingham life.*¹¹⁵

Raleigh Cycles, founded in 1887, was one of many companies to emerge during the bicycle boom of the late nineteenth century. Like most of its competitors it was initially based in a workshop - in this case situated in Raleigh Street, Nottingham – where twelve employees turned out three hand-made machines a week. This small business attracted the attention of Frank Bowden, a lawyer and financier who had made his fortune in Hong Kong, who bought the firm for £20,000 in 1889 just as enthusiasm for cycling was beginning to take off. By 1896, when the Raleigh Cycle Company was floated on the stock market for £200,000,

¹¹⁵ *Nottingham Evening Post, Bygones Special*, 50, *Raleigh: The Golden Years*, March 2010, p.2.

production had expanded significantly and Raleigh had become one of the biggest businesses in Nottingham with a workforce of about 2,000 men and women.¹¹⁶ The company was strong enough to survive in difficult conditions after the stock market boom in cycle shares collapsed in 1898 putting many manufacturers out of business. Investors were naturally cautious about investing in the industry as so many had lost money during the short-lived boom. Moreover, as John Lowerson has observed, 'English cycle makers operated on very tight margins': it was estimated in 1900 that only nine of the 23 leading English manufacturers had been able to pay any dividend at all to their shareholders.¹¹⁷ In these conditions it helped, no doubt, that Raleigh's owners had developed marketing strategies designed to enhance the fame of its cycles. When the leading competitive cyclist of the day, the American A. A. Zimmerman ('Jimmy'), had competed in Britain in 1892 he had raced on a Raleigh machine as he did when he won the International Cycling Association's first World Championship in Chicago a year later, giving the Nottingham firm an edge over its competitors which it exploited in advertising its products.¹¹⁸

After converting to production for the war effort between 1914 and 1918, Raleigh refocused on cycle manufacture in the post-war years and was well positioned to take

¹¹⁶ For the early history of Raleigh see S.D. Chapman, 'Economy, Industry and Employment', in Beckett, J. (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp.492-93; see also <http://www.raleigh.co.uk/CompanyHistory/>, (accessed 18 November 2009).

¹¹⁷ J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p.236; see also A.E. Harrison, 'Joint-Stock Flotation in the Cycle, Motor-Vehicle and Related Industries, 1882-1914', *Business History*, 23 (2), 1981, 165-90.

¹¹⁸ Chapman, 'Economy, Industry and Employment', p.493; see also http://www.oyvelo.com/-aa_zimmerman-, (accessed, 15 February 2013).

advantage of a massive increase in demand. By the 1920s, Richard Holt argues that the bicycle had become part of the social fabric. Getting a bike became something of a rite of passage for young working-class males; 'cycling trips, either casually arranged by small groups of friends or more formally organised through the clubs run by the Cyclists' Touring Club, the National Cyclists' Union and other bodies, were commonplace'.¹¹⁹ More efficient mass production techniques brought the price of the standard bicycle down from £14 in 1921 to just under £5 in 1939 when output at Raleigh reached 500,000 machines a year. According to one internal source the factory seemed like a 'sleepless machine' continuously turning out more and more cycles.¹²⁰ It was in this context that the company began to expand sports and social provision for its growing workforce. The in-house magazine, *The Raligram*, started in the mid 1920s, made a significant contribution in this area, its content ranging widely from articles of general interest on the international political situation to more parochial affairs – the results of matches played by various company sports teams and births, deaths and weddings.

As in the First World War, Raleigh was turned over to war production between 1939 and 1945 and the production of bicycles was drastically reduced. Within the factory various compromises were made in order to meet production targets. One former employee recalled working in the tool room as a 'dilutee', undertaking jobs that would normally have been reserved for 'time-served' men who had completed a five-year apprenticeship. It was made clear that this was a temporary arrangement and that he would be expected to give

¹¹⁹ R. Holt, *Sport and the British; A Modern History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.197-98.

¹²⁰ Nottinghamshire County Records Office [NCRO], DD/RN/7/2/17/4, *In-house history of Raleigh Industries Ltd*, 1940, p.3; Chapman, 'Economy, Industry and Employment', p .494.

up this job when the war was over.¹²¹ Renamed Raleigh Industries Limited, the company quickly returned to cycle manufacturing after 1945 and continued to expand – a million cycles were produced in 1951 of which 70 per cent were exported – but it has been suggested that a rather conservative culture had developed by this time. Thus, though Raleigh came to totally dominate the manufacture of cycles in Britain, buying out Triumph of Coventry in 1954 and BSA of Birmingham in 1957, as well as opening manufacturing subsidiaries in the United States (1947), India and South Africa (1952) and Holland (1957), it was rather slow to respond to changing consumer preferences. In particular, Raleigh's 'deep attachment to the pedal cycle led to a critical delay in diversifying'. Moreover, having merged with the British Bicycle Corporation in 1960, when it did begin to diversify into the manufacture of mopeds and motor-scooters, 'there were growing tensions between business strategy and organisational culture as the company attempted to re-position itself in a more hostile market environment'.¹²² In the long run this proved fatal to Raleigh's future as a mass manufacturer of cycles, though decline did not really set in until after the mid 1970s, beyond the scope of this study. Though its operations were subsequently scaled down – Raleigh UK had about 200 employees in 2003 – it is clear that the company was a major player in the national, regional and local economies for almost a hundred years, not least, as will be argued, in relation to the provision of works-based leisure and recreation opportunities.

However, any consideration of sports and social activities clustered around the Raleigh works has to take into account the wider context of what was available to the

¹²¹ Mick Tomlinson's recollections, *Nottingham Evening Post*, 4 October 1991, p.6.

¹²² R. Lloyd-Jones, M.J. Lewis and M. Eason, 'Culture as Metaphor: Company Culture and Business Strategy at Raleigh Industries, c.1945-60', *Business History*, 41(3), 1999, 94.

company's employees in and around Nottingham. Though the first phase of industrialisation in Nottingham had been largely based on lace manufacture the early twentieth century saw a rapid diversification of the city's industrial base. The economy of what had once been referred to as the 'City of Lace' was increasingly dominated by three powerful manufacturing companies – Boots Pure Drug Company, Imperial Tobacco (Players) and Raleigh Cycles. This diversified base helped to ensure that Nottingham negotiated the difficulties of the inter-war years rather better than other industrial centres based on single industries. Thus J.B. Priestley, having visited Nottingham in the early 1930s, was moved to comment that the city was 'fortunate in not having to depend entirely upon the textiles trades'; it had the 'big concerns' of Player's, Boot's and Raleigh to fall back on.¹²³ Furthermore, each of these three companies could boast a range of sport and social provision that was important not only for their respective workforces but for the wider population of the rapidly growing city where they were located. Having established itself as an industrial city in the nineteenth century, Nottingham continued to grow rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century as its industrial base diversified. Nottingham was a rapidly expanding urban community with a population of 239,743 in 1901, rising steadily to 266,801 in 1931 and reaching 311,899 by 1961.¹²⁴ Therefore there was a significant market for the kind of commercialised entertainment that was on offer in other large towns and cities as the impact of shorter working hours and rising disposable incomes became apparent in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Spectator sports were a significant distraction,

¹²³ J.B. Priestley, *English Journey*, (London: Mandarin, 1994), pp.134-135; first published in 1933.

¹²⁴ These figures derived from census returns are for the area administered by the County Borough and Metropolitan Borough of Nottingham; http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10031389/cube/TOT_POP, (accessed 25 February 2014).

especially once working men were free to enjoy a Saturday afternoon of leisure. The city could boast two professional football clubs, Notts County, founded in 1862, and their rivals Nottingham Forest, formed three years later in 1865. County were founder members of the Football League in 1888; Forest joined in 1892. By 1913, the last season before the First World War, County's average home attendance was 11,800; Forest's was 8,050; in 1948-49, the peak season for Football League attendances, County and Forest averaged 30,002 and 24,175 respectively.¹²⁵ Fortuitously the 'Derby' match of 1933, when the two rivals met, coincided with J.B. Priestley's journey through England and he commented from the terraces that it seemed odd that the city should divide in 'sporting allegiance'.¹²⁶ Cricket was being played at Trent Bridge, the home of the Nottinghamshire county side, from as early as 1844 and the ground was a venue for test matches, attracting large crowds. Horse racing was on offer at Colwick Park, on the outskirts of the city, from 1892.¹²⁷ Opportunities for middle-class active participation in sport were afforded by the River Trent which provided a home for rowing and sailing clubs; and in the early years of the twentieth century Nottingham became one of the first municipal authorities to provide 'good town links' with the artisan golfer in mind.¹²⁸ Sports grounds are a central feature of Nottingham's urban landscape. Football, cricket, hockey, rugby union, tennis and bowls were well provided for meaning that Raleigh employees, for example, might choose to enjoy

¹²⁵ B. Tabner, *Football through the Turnstiles ... Again* (Harefield: Yore Publications, 2002), pp. 103, 125.

¹²⁶ Priestley, *English Journey*, p.143; see also J. Beckett, *The East Midlands from A.D. 1000* (London: Longmans, 1988), pp.229-232.

¹²⁷ <http://www.talkhorseracing.co.uk>, (accessed 22 April 2010).

¹²⁸ Beckett, *East Midlands*, p.232; J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p.134.

a wide range of the sporting and social activities offered by local clubs as well as those provided by the firm.

In addition, Nottingham offered the numerous non-sporting leisure opportunities to be found in other English cities of the period. Some of these were supplied by non-commercial providers, such as nonconformist chapels though Jeffery Hill has noted that the physical expansion of Nottingham in the first thirty years of the twentieth century meant that the rich now lived further away from the poor than before and were less likely to subsidise chapel-based recreation. During the 1920s and 1930s the Independent Labour Party offered cricket matches, dramatic events whist drives and more, alongside its particular brand of left-wing politics.¹²⁹ However, this kind of voluntary provision was increasingly less important as mass commercial entertainment became firmly established. The Theatre Royal had opened in 1865 and Nottingham Playhouse, opened in 1963, testified to a continuing tradition of live theatre.¹³⁰ More significant in terms of popular entertainment were the sixty cinemas in and around the city by the 1940s and numerous dance halls, for example, the *Palais de Danse*, Astoria Dance Ballroom and the Victoria Ballroom.¹³¹ Pubs remained important centres of social life throughout the period under review. Priestley had commented on the number of pubs in Nottingham in the 1930s; Hill argues that they became even more important centres of social recreation for working-class men and women after 1945, providing 'not only drink but companionship and a host of links

¹²⁹ J. Hill, 'Leisure', in J. Beckett, (ed.), *A Centenary History of Nottingham* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.540.

¹³⁰ Beckett, *East Midlands*, p. 351.

¹³¹ V. Wood, 'Women at Work in Nottingham, 1945-1955', (MA thesis, Nottingham University, 2007), pp.62-63.

with the community at large'.¹³² It seems likely that many of these links had been forged in the workplace initially.

Val Wood has argued convincingly that working women in Nottingham, especially in the period after the Second World War, formed a good deal of their social and recreational lives around the workplace. The Raleigh Social Club, she indicates, had a membership of around 2,000 and proved popular for a Saturday night out, often with husbands and family and friends. Wood has also observed, however, that while the workplace was central to working women's leisure activities at this time, they were increasingly taking advantage of the alternatives on offer in the city, usually in the company of friends made at work.¹³³ A former employee who had started work in the turnery department (Raleigh) at the age of 14 in 1943 was well aware of what was on offer at Raleigh: 'there were a lot of families and workmates were friendly. We enjoyed trips to Blackpool and other places and there was a good sports ground at Coach Road'.¹³⁴ Thus works-based activities were important but they did not preclude taking advantage of the many other opportunities to spend leisure time enjoyably in one of England's larger cities.

The aim of this introduction has been to provide both context and framework for the case study that follows. In the first instance the sports provision at Raleigh Cycle Company will be examined. This section addresses the origins of the Raleigh Athletic Club (hereafter RAC) and reviews the activities of the various teams and clubs that operated under its umbrella. Opportunities for Raleigh's female employees to participate in sport form an

¹³² J. Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 132.

¹³³ Wood, 'Women at Work in Nottingham', pp. 60-62.

¹³⁴ *Nottingham Evening Post, Bygones Special*, 50, March 2010, p.13.

important part of this story and are given separate consideration. An attempt will then be made to locate workplace-based sport at Raleigh within the context of the broader sporting scene in Nottingham. Attention will then be focused on the extensive range of social activities available to Raleigh employees. The role and function of the Raleigh Social Club (hereafter RSC) will be considered along with the influence of female workers and the work of welfare supervisors. An examination of the relationship between the company's social provision and the community at large will follow. Simon Phillips, in his study of Boots, has provided clear evidence that company provision at the firm was stimulated by a 'wider desire to improve the social lives of the community, both inside and outside of the workplace'.¹³⁵ Additionally, this section of the chapter will focus on what appears to be a seamless link between sport and social activities and will examine how they related to each other.

Origins and Growth of the Raleigh Athletic Club

There is a certain symmetry here in that in the Summer 1970 issue of Raleigh's in-house magazine, the *Raleigh Review*, published at the very end of the period under review, carried a short history of the RAC including an account of its origins. William Grocock, the general secretary of the club at the time, explained that 'the origins of the Raleigh Athletic Club date back to 1902, when the first historic meeting was held in a small room in the works'. Employees would use this venue and play cards, dominoes, skittles and other games; a

¹³⁵ S. Phillips, "'Fellowship in Recreation, Fellowship in Ideals': Sport, Leisure and Culture at Boots Pure Drug Company, Nottingham, c.1883-1945', *Midland History*, 29, 2004, 112.

football and cricket team were formed soon after.¹³⁶ An account of the RAC's history published some years later, however, suggested that 'the origins of the Raleigh Athletic Club go back to the 1890s when a group of men used to get together in their lunch hour to play football'. An interdepartmental football league soon followed, although the writer was vague on details, merely stating that this was in the early years of the twentieth century.¹³⁷ It is difficult, therefore, to offer a conclusive account of how the RAC came into existence, but it seems significant that both accounts indicate that the initiatives come from the workers rather than 'top-down' from the management. It is not unreasonable to assume that some employees would have engaged in informal recreational activities on an *ad hoc* basis during breaks from work during the company's early years and that these became formalised as the enterprise grew larger and took on more staff. If this was the case, it would mirror the experience at the neighbouring Boots Pure Drug Company as described by Simon Phillips, where the Boots Athletic Club, founded in 1894, appears to have grown organically from casual recreation until it reached a point where 'enthusiasm grew, more employees expressed an interest in joining and company management took steps to further the progress of the venture'.¹³⁸

The recollections of Mick Tomlinson, who started work for Raleigh in 1923, retiring fifty years later, confirm the story of the RAC's development in outline. He recalled that 'the athletic club had its origins in the very early days, but became an established part of the

¹³⁶ Nottinghamshire County Records Office, [hereafter NCRO], DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, Summer 1970.

¹³⁷ *Nottingham Evening Post, Bygones Special*, 50, March 2010, p.20.

¹³⁸ S. Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at the Boots Pure Drug Company 1883-1945', (PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2003), p. 145.

employees' lives in later years'. Mick appears to have built his life around the RAC playing cricket, football, tennis and badminton and serving in turn as both captain and secretary. 'I was into everything', he explained, '... I virtually lived at Coach Road, where the sports ground was. I brought my family up there, more or less!'¹³⁹ Long-serving employees such as Mick were the backbone of works teams and his experience lends weight to the notion that the provision of sports activities helped to underpin employee loyalty to the company. Works football teams, Tony Mason contends, 'not only help to attach workers to the firm or company, providing the young worker in particular with an aid to identity, but may even attract some workers to join the firm in the first place'.¹⁴⁰ In this instance it seems likely that Mick's high level of personal involvement in company sport would have been a factor in ensuring that he stayed with the firm, not least because he and his family appear to have derived so much pleasure from it.

Though the precise origins of the RAC remain uncertain it is clear that it was in the interwar period that the club became firmly established and here the intervention of the company was critical. Dave Russell has argued that 'it is dangerous to assume that ... works teams were always based on an initiative from above, for many almost certainly resulted from grass roots approaches'.¹⁴¹ It seems likely that this was the case at Raleigh in the first instance. By the late 1920s, however, as the number of Raleigh employees engaged in sports activities increased, the RAC effectively outgrew the facilities then available at local parks and recreation grounds, leading the company to intervene directly through setting

¹³⁹ *Nottingham Evening Post*, 4 October 1991, p.6.

¹⁴⁰ T. Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p.28.

¹⁴¹ D. Russell, *Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995*, (Preston: Carnegie, 1997), p. 16.

funds aside to finance what it clearly regarded as an important aspect of its industrial welfare strategy. Though there is no evidence to suggest that the management was responding directly to an approach from below, it clearly had formed the opinion that there was some advantage in supporting the RAC and its many activities. In 1927, with the backing of Sir Harold Bowden, who took a keen interest in the RAC, Raleigh bought 13 acres of land on Ilkeston Road in Radford to be used for company sport. The first set of Rules for the RAC, drawn up at the same time, indicate that, wherever the initiative came from, the Raleigh Cycle Company was now very much in control. According to the rules, the object of the RAC was 'to promote and assist any sports, pastimes, recreations and other forms of athletic and social activity'. It was established that the club colours would be black and amber; this was a way of helping to ensure that employees could identify more easily with the club and what it represented. Rule 7, however, which set out the way in which the RAC would be managed, made it clear that the company, having invested a significant sum of money to purchase the site, was determined to ensure that the club officials would be employees on whom they could rely.

7. Management. (a) The management of the club shall be in the hands of an executive Committee consisting of a Chairman, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Paid Assistant Secretary (all appointed by The Raleigh Cycle Co., Ltd.) and one delegate from each workshop or department. Eleven to form a quorum.¹⁴²

Sir Harold Bowden, according to the oral testimony of one Raleigh employee, was 'a benevolent sort of bloke' who took 'an interest in the employees'; he was also responsible

¹⁴² NCRO, DD/RN/12/1/4, *Rules of the Raleigh Athletic Club*, 2 March 1927.

for starting a benevolent fund.¹⁴³ What these arrangements indicated, however, was not simply benevolence but that the RAC was to operate as an instrument of Raleigh's industrial welfare policy. Though delegates from the various departments might have their say, the real power base within the executive comprised the officials appointed by – and in one case directly paid by – the Raleigh Cycle Company.

It was soon clear that the company's commitment to the RAC represented a benign form of paternalism. Within three years the Ilkeston Road site became subject to a compulsory purchase order. However, 'tragedy was averted' when the company stepped in to purchase 14 acres of land at Coach Road, Wollaton, and went on to finance the building of a pavilion with separate wings for men and women, hot and cold baths and showers and living accommodation for a resident steward. A further 16.5 acres of playing fields were purchased at a later point and added to the original site.¹⁴⁴ By the end of the 1930s facilities on this expanded site were impressive. They included, three football pitches, one of which was fully enclosed, three cricket squares, four hard tennis courts, a bowling green, a running track, a hockey pitch and a fishing pond. In addition, badminton, indoor bowls and table tennis were catered for in the works canteen. The RAC also hired a municipal swimming bath in the city centre for one night per week solely for the use of club members and access to a rifle range was also secured.¹⁴⁵ In the 1930s, for a weekly payment of one penny, which was matched by the firm, employees could enjoy the full range of activities offered by the RAC. By 1957 the *Raligram* was reporting that membership of the club was

¹⁴³ Nottingham Central Library, Department of Community and Culture, [hereafter NCL], Nottingham Oral History Project, A5a.

¹⁴⁴ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, 'History of the Raleigh Athletic Club', *Raleigh Review*, Summer 1970.

¹⁴⁵ *Nottingham Evening Post, Bygones Special*, 50, March 2010, p.20.

open to all employees for a subscription of two pence weekly (a penny for employees under the age of 18) with subscriptions deducted from wages. Membership of an individual section, however, cost a further 2s 6d (25p) a year. At this point additional sports such as archery, golf, netball and boxing were on offer.¹⁴⁶

One event especially was central to the rise of the RAC. The Annual Sports Day which originated in 1943 as a Children's Sports Day, fulfilled an important function both for the Raleigh company and its sports club. In 1949 the company magazine described Sports Day as 'this big event in the lives of Raleigh employees', adding that it was only 'thanks to the keen interest and generosity of Raleigh Directors' that such an event could take place. This rhetoric was symptomatic of a paternalistic culture with the firm looking to display its caring side to the workforce and to the local community more generally. At the same time, the RAC could use the event to showcase the full range of its activities and to reinforce its position as a pillar of company welfare. The festive occasion provided an opportunity for a conspicuous display of loyalty to the management; at the end of proceedings, Mr Grocock, chair of the RAC executive, addressed the crowd with a message of thanks to Raleigh's directors who had financed this enjoyable day out for employees and their families.¹⁴⁷ RAC sports days thus followed a similar pattern to those provided by other paternalistic and/or progressive employers. Lever Brothers, for example, honoured their founder, William Lever, by arranging an annual sports day on the Saturday nearest to his birthday. The event was called 'Founder's Day' and incorporated a whole host of attractions from a Fancy Dress

¹⁴⁶ NCL, *Raligram*, Company Works Magazine, Raleigh Cycle Company, January 1957, pp.22-23.

¹⁴⁷ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/5, *Raligram*, 1949, p.28.

Competition for children to boxing bouts against a local club.¹⁴⁸ At Boots, the annual Sports Gala Day eventually became a 'time-honoured tradition of company life'. It offered an opportunity for manufacturing and retail staff to come together. This was important as it helped to remove the sense of isolation that retail outlets could often feel and reinforced the idea that the company's employees were all part of one team working together.¹⁴⁹

Throughout the post war period the RAC maintained a strong and active sports programme, even as the club moved into the 1970s. Its activities still encompassed an impressive range - cricket, football, fishing, golf, mixed hockey, table tennis and more - though, significantly, the amount of space afforded to sport in the company magazine was less than in the pre-1960 editions, with far more column inches now given over to advertising. The 1971 spring edition of the *Raleigh Review* carried a large advertisement urging employees to 'SUPPORT YOUR FAVOURITE SPORT THROUGH THE R.A.C'.¹⁵⁰ Such an appeal would probably have been considered unnecessary twenty or thirty years earlier and this suggests that support for the RAC among Raleigh's employees was weakening by the end of our period. Nevertheless, it is clear that for most of fifty years or so that it had been in existence the RAC and the various clubs that were affiliated to it had enjoyed significant support. It is on the organisation, membership and activities of these clubs that collectively constituted the RAC that attention will now be focused.

Clubs, Teams and Games

¹⁴⁸ J. Griffiths, "'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy ...': the Rites and Rituals of Company Life at Lever Brothers, c.1900-c.1990", *Business History*, 37 (4), 1995, 28-32.

¹⁴⁹ Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at Boots', pp.179-182.

¹⁵⁰ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, Spring, 1971.

Michael Heller clearly identifies, in his work on London clerks, that employers tended to emphasize 'values such as loyalty, commitment and seniority'.¹⁵¹ In May 1968 Henry Cutts was honoured by a benefit match in recognition of his forty-one years of service to the Raleigh Athletic Football Club (RAFC). Starting his playing career in 1927, he played in more than 650 games for RAFC and won 'every honour it is possible to gain in local amateur football'. The match programme for this special occasion noted that Henry was a part of the best ever Raleigh team of 1936/37 who completed the 'double' by winning their league (Notts Alliance) and also the Notts Senior Cup. Fittingly then, the game was between Raleigh and the Rest of the Notts Alliance. Henry Cutts was the epitome of the works' sportsman. Loyal, both to Raleigh and to the RAFC, he was the kind of employee that the firm sought to cultivate through its industrial welfare strategy. He was, moreover, the epitome of gentlemanly virtues both on and off the pitch. The programme carried a poignant tribute: 'The term "A Gentleman on and off the field" applies unquestionably to this grand sportsman. A clean-living player all through, and the Raleigh Club will be poorer in wisdom on his retirement'.¹⁵² This not only reflected well on Henry Cutts, it also reflected well on the company, signalling the success of their industrial welfare strategy.

While Henry Cutts may have been perfectly happy to be attached to RAFC for his entire working life, other Raleigh employees may have experienced a degree of company coercion. Certainly, John Attenborough's experience seems to have been different. Attenborough, who worked for Raleigh in the early 1930s along with some of his teammates from Lenton Gregory FC recalled that 'quite a few of the team including myself, worked for

¹⁵¹ M.Heller, 'Sport, Bureaucracies and London Clerks 1880-1939', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (5), 2008, 582.

¹⁵² NCRO, DD/RN/12/75, *Programme for Henry Cutts Benefit Football Game*,

the Raleigh and they issued an ultimatum that footballers who worked there must play for the works team'. As a result of this pressure the Lenton Gregory club folded. It was only after he left the Raleigh Company in 1934 that he was able to play for a team of his choice.¹⁵³ Playing for the works team, it seems, whether you wanted to or not, was an unwritten agreement of your employment with the firm at that time. Trampling on local sensitivities in this way could not have been good for Raleigh's image and may have raised some doubts about pursuing this rigid policy or, perhaps, it simply became more difficult to exert pressure on employees in the same way after the Second World War. A different approach was apparent by 1949 when the *Raligram* appealed, 'to those footballers who are Company employees, and at present playing for outside clubs, to join the RAC team and help [keep] Raleigh Football Club in its rightful place'.¹⁵⁴ There was recognition here that, while the company could exert some pressure, Raleigh employees might have loyalties other than to their workplace and might chose to spend their leisure time accordingly.

Cricket proved to be very popular amongst the Raleigh workforce, partly because it had a broader appeal than some of the other team based games. Though it provided an opportunity to exercise and socialise on summer afternoons and evenings, cricket was less demanding physically than football, consequently age and fitness was less of a barrier to active participation. Cricket, moreover, had a broader cross-class appeal. Ross McKibbin makes the important observation that 'in so far as cricket was played and followed throughout the country by all social classes and by both men and women, it was the most

¹⁵³ 'Lenton Gregory F.C.', *Lenton Times*, (Magazine of the Lenton Local History Society), 6, October 1991.

¹⁵⁴ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/4, *Raligram*, 1949, p.33.

“national” of all sports’.¹⁵⁵ Thus, though Brad Beaven has argued that ‘there existed in most firms very distinct staff and worker leisure activities’, cricket may have provided some opportunities for management and other grades to come together at Raleigh.¹⁵⁶ It provided occasions, for example, when the company’s directors could fulfil their frustrated sporting ambitions while promoting team-building. Illustration 1.1 shows the Managing Director’s XI about to take on the Works Director’s XI in 1947, a distinctly middle-class and middle-aged image. At first-class level the game’s governing body continued to categorise middle and working-class cricketers as either ‘gentlemen’ or ‘players’ until the early 1960s.¹⁵⁷ There is more evidence here of ‘gentlemen’ than ‘players’. Similar photographic images of the Raleigh tennis team for 1949 offer few indications of youthful shop-floor members.¹⁵⁸ (See illustration 1:2)

¹⁵⁵ R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.232.

¹⁵⁶ B. Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.147.

¹⁵⁷ See R.Holt and T.Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.7.

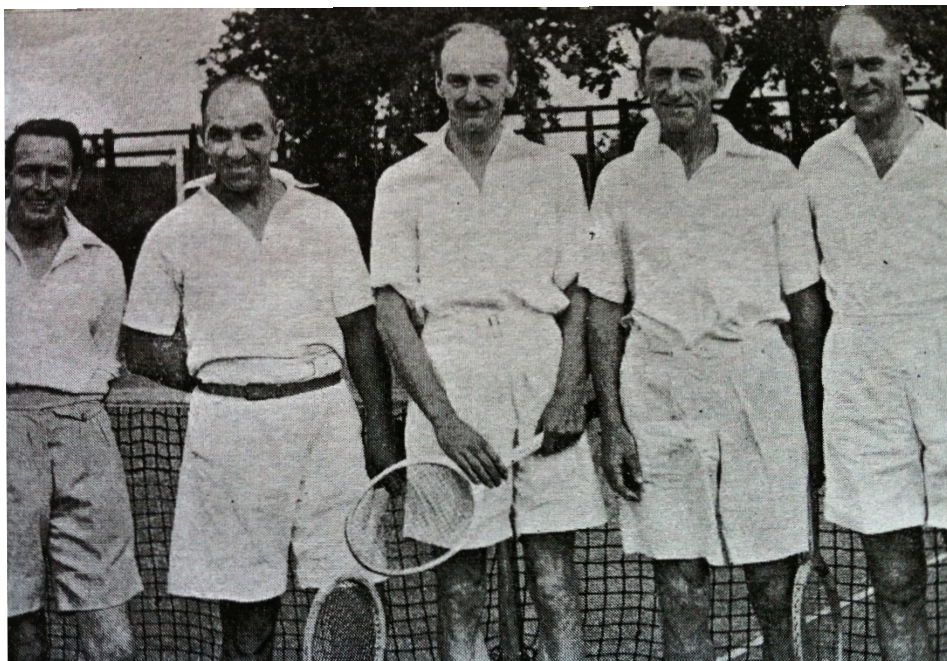
¹⁵⁸ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/6, *Raligram*, 1949, p. 28.



1.1: Managing Director's XI versus Works Director's XI cricket match 1947.

Mr George Wilson, Managing Director of Raleigh Industries Ltd, tossing the coin.

Source: NCRO, DD/RN/6/17/5.



1.2: Raleigh Tennis Team, 1950.

Source: NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/6.

Cricket was undoubtedly a popular sport at Raleigh. Terry Radford who worked for the company at Sturmeys Archer Assembly between 1956 and 1986, recalls how he was approached by certain members of the cricket club when they heard that he had played cricket for his school team and, as a result, played on an *ad hoc* basis for his depot in the inter-departmental cricket league. Of particular interest here is the fact that Terry was not an overly keen sportsman but played 'more for the social side of things, and a pint or two after the game'. However, he states that teams he played for were most certainly organised and driven from the shop-floor, without any element of compulsion from the management.¹⁵⁹ This suggests that playing for the department may have reflected and enhanced primary group loyalties across the company and could be justified as encouraging teamwork.

One of the reasons why Raleigh encouraged and funded these activities was that sport, especially team sports, offered opportunities to enhance the image of the company in the wider community. Matthew Taylor argues convincingly that successes gained on the football field, for example, 'could also be an important source of publicity for the firm'.¹⁶⁰ Matches against teams from other companies could generate significant local interest as the annual football fixture between W.H. Symington's, a corset manufacturer based in Market Harborough, and the Harborough Rubber Company works team suggested. Symington's were involved in a Leicestershire Senior Cup tie in 1946 against the powerful Brush Works Football Club, a game which attracted over 2,000 spectators.¹⁶¹ This suggests that inter-company sport enabled some workers to identify with the firm's team in the same way that

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Terry Radford, former employee of Raleigh Cycle Company, 13 May 2010.

¹⁶⁰ M. Taylor, *The Association Game: A History of British Football*, (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), p.130.

¹⁶¹ D. Twydell, *Defunct F.C. Club Histories and Statistic*, (Harefield: Dave Twydell, 1988), p.237.

they might identify with their local amateur team; indeed, for some spectators, they may have been the local team that they chose to follow. Thus, such occasions allowed firms to display their progressive, paternalistic face while embedding themselves in local communities.

Annual matches between company teams were also used to cement friendly relations between firms that did business with each other. In the post-war period Raleigh's cricketers played an annual fixture against J.J. Habershon & Sons of Rotherham, a steel company that supplied wheel rims to Raleigh. Speaking at the annual general meeting and dinner for the cricket section in 1946, Mr Geoffrey King, chair for the evening, 'spoke of the pleasure given our players in matches with other industrial organisations'.¹⁶² The annual match against Habershon was viewed in a very positive light with the *Raligram* determined to emphasise that having a pleasant day out was more important than securing victory. 'On the 3rd of July', it was reported in 1949, 'a match was played at Rotherham against our old friends "Habershon". The party went over by bus, and although we lost, the weather was glorious and everybody really enjoyed themselves'.¹⁶³ Evidently, sport – and the socialising that often went with it – could help to underpin good relations with other companies, especially those on whom Raleigh relied heavily. In this respect Raleigh may have simply been following the good practice established by Boots. As *The Bee*, one of its in-house magazines, had noted in 1921: 'British people are born sports, though we may not boast of

¹⁶² NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/4, *Raligram*, 1946, p.27.

¹⁶³ NCRO, *Raligram*, September, 1949, p.23.

many world champions at present. The spirit of Tests is now keen between our English Company and our Brother Organisation, Liggetts Stores'.¹⁶⁴

Similarly, sport could be a useful way of promoting good relations between different parts of a large company which grew to have operations in many different locations. It was not just in Nottingham that sports and social activities were allowed to flourish. In 1948, the company magazine reported that a Sports and Social Club had been formed at Raleigh's London depot; table tennis equipment and a dart board had been purchased to provide staff recreational facilities in their lunch hour and a tennis tournament had been organised on local courts.¹⁶⁵ That these arrangements were thought worthy of reporting in the *Raligram* indicates the company's commitment to the sporting aspect of industrial welfare for all its employees, however distant they were from the home base. At times, important intra-company links were made, notably between Raleigh Nottingham and the Irish Raleigh Athletic Club based at its subsidiary in Dublin, which was welcomed for two days of competition in 1949. This provided the *Raligram* with another opportunity to generate positivity as it reflected on 'yet another shining example of the fellowship which exists between our respective companies'. Football was the main attraction with Nottingham Raleigh beating the Irish 4-1. A dance and whist drive was arranged for after the match and the second day was taken up with a tour of Derbyshire, culminating in a meal at the Lathkil Dale Hotel.¹⁶⁶ Activities of this kind saw Raleigh imitating its powerful neighbour, the Boots Pure Drug Company, which facilitated sporting visits to Nottingham by teams from its London and Manchester warehouses. As the Welfare Supervisor was keen to point out in

¹⁶⁴ NCL, *The Bee*, Company Works Magazine, Retail Staff, Boots Pure Drug Company, November 1921, p.6.

¹⁶⁵ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/3, *Raligram*, 1948, p.29.

¹⁶⁶ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/6, *Raligram* 1949, p.32.

the company magazine (*The Beacon*) this was all due to 'the generosity of the firm'.¹⁶⁷ It is clear that the intention was that these inter-depot events would help to foster an extended family ethos. Literature from the company magazines is frequently punctuated with 'our friends', 'fellowship' and 'brothers', such language imparted a sense of belonging and teamwork in individual employees. With depots stretching from Belfast to London, Bristol and Leeds, Raleigh was conscious of engaging its entire workforce in the industrial welfare programmes available.

It is clear, however, that some sporting activities were more likely than others to engage the attention of significant numbers of Raleigh workers. Bowls, for example, represented one of the most successful sections in works sport. Before the Second World War bowls was on the periphery of leisure activity but appeared to surge in popularity in the immediate post-war years. Membership almost doubled from 46 to 82 between 1946 and 1947 and stood at 103 in 1949. According to the *Raligram* 'this section has broken all records'; entries for The Albert Ball Memorial Bowl in 1949 reached a staggering 158 pairs, as a result the 'Final' 'took ten hours to play'.¹⁶⁸ It remained a strong feature of the sporting scene at Raleigh on into the 1950s; the inter-departmental league for bowls, moreover, had grown to 18 teams by 1953 with the likes of the Bracket Department and Fork and Bar proving successful.¹⁶⁹

Bowls, though played in various forms in England for centuries, had grown in popularity in the early years of the twentieth century. The gentle exercise that it offered

¹⁶⁷ NCL, *The Beacon*, Company Works Magazine, Boots Pure Drug Company, February 1930, p.3.

¹⁶⁸ NCRO, *Raligram*, September 1949, p.22.

¹⁶⁹ NCRO, *Raligram*, February 1956, p.25.

appealed to men who were past their sporting prime in other respects; it also offered ample opportunities for men to bond socially; bowling clubs were often characterised by 'a certain masonic feeling of unity'.¹⁷⁰ It certainly appears to have provided opportunities for employers – and Raleigh was no exception here – 'to foster contentment and identification with the company in more institutional ways'.¹⁷¹ At the same time, it could be used to transmit a very positive corporate image. Raleigh's reputation for quality and for treating its workers well could only have been enhanced in 1950 when the company's bowling team were issued with new blazers bearing the Raleigh crest.¹⁷² The advice given to bowlers about to embark on the club's fourth annual tour to Norfolk in 1956 is indicative. In a booklet issued by the bowling club under the heading 'Useful Information', players were advised to wear grey flannel trousers and blazer as match dress and reminded not to forget their woods, smokes and shaving kits. Whether this type of instruction can be construed as a form of paternalism or management control is debateable, it is, nonetheless, symptomatic of a great deal of the company literature addressed at workers. The booklet ends by asking the club members to 'wear a cheerful countenance at all times'.¹⁷³ Visual imagery in the company magazine confirms that the majority of Raleigh bowlers were middle-aged or older. It seems likely that they may have been a little more malleable than some of the younger members in other branches of the RAC in conforming to the standards of behaviour that the company valued.

¹⁷⁰ Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes*, pp.112-13.

¹⁷¹ T. Claydon, 'Trade Unions, Employers and Industrial Relations in the British Motor Industry c.1919-45', *Business History*, 29 (3), 1987, 310.

¹⁷² NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/8, *Raligram*, August 1950, p.25.

¹⁷³ NCRO, DD/RN/12/43, Raleigh Bowls Club, *Bowling Club Itinerary*, 1956.

Coarse fishing was an immensely popular sport for working-class men and, not surprisingly, appears to have become a major feature of RAC activities after the Second World War. The origins of the angling club are obscure though it seems possible that it may have grown organically out of informal arrangements between workmates who would have fished together informally in their spare time but came to see some advantages in joining the club. After 1945 membership grew rapidly and this growth was sustained over a long period. Membership of 110 in 1948 was said to establish a record high, but growth continued; there were 127 members by 1950 and 187 in 1953; 294 anglers subscribed for the 1971 season.¹⁷⁴ Some may have been attracted by the opportunity to fish competitively. The array of cups and competitions was impressive, including in 1971 – the RAC Cup, the Jackson Cup, the Corpe Trophy, the Raynor Cup, the Billings Knock-Out Cup and the G.D. Smith Aggregate Cup.¹⁷⁵ What was probably more important was that the Raleigh grounds at Coach Road incorporated a fishing pond. Terry Radford recalled that fisherman dotted round the pond was a familiar sight, although he could never see the point of it all, ‘sitting there all day to catch a fish for then just to put it back in the water’.¹⁷⁶ It may not have appealed to everybody but angling thrived. Support was sufficiently strong to attract at least one local tackle shop, ‘The Anglers Shop’, which offered prizes to the winners of competitions fished on the pond at Coach Road.¹⁷⁷ This follows a pattern established elsewhere; Holt underlines this theme suggesting that ‘prizes were offered by local

¹⁷⁴ NCRO, *Raligram*, *Raleigh Review*, 1948, 1950, 1953, 1971.

¹⁷⁵ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, Spring 1971.

¹⁷⁶ Terry Radford Interview.

¹⁷⁷ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 196, p.31.

tradesmen, brewers, and newspapers', in competitions fished around Sheffield.¹⁷⁸ It should be emphasised that fishing at Raleigh, as much as the evidence suggests, was coarse fishing and therefore a working- class pastime. Game fishing for trout and salmon, a relatively expensive sport associated with the middle and upper class, is not mentioned in company literature. It seems likely that fishing at Raleigh had its roots in the various shop-floor departments; it provided an opportunity for like-minded individuals who worked together to relax together in a seamless transition from labour to recreation.

One Raleigh fisherman's success on the river bank was highlighted in the *Raleigh Review* for 1962. Charles Read, who had given fifty years service to the company, was described as 'a quiet, reticent man, solid and dependable, a man who has worked hard and played well'. Indeed, he had played very well; having twice won the British Angling Association championship reputed to be the largest fishing competition held anywhere in the world, attracting over 4,000 competitors, in 1931 and 1938. Interestingly, the extensive column that eulogises about Mr Read's career makes no mention of him fishing for the Raleigh Club, it is, however, noted that he helped form the Credenda Angling Club in the 1930s.¹⁷⁹ This is not to say that Charles did not fish for the Raleigh Club but, if he did, it seems curious that no mention is made of the connection here. It alerts us to the idea that, whatever the company offered, some workers might chose to pursue their favoured leisure activity elsewhere. However, it is clear that the development of the angling section at RAC was broadly in line with national trends. The appeal of working-class angling, McKibbin clearly states, was that it was both recreational and competitive, with competition

¹⁷⁸ Holt, *Sport and the British*, p.189.

¹⁷⁹ NCRO, *Raleigh Review*, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, September 1962, p.2.

organised by clubs attached to pubs, workingmen's clubs' and (increasingly) larger factories and workshops'.¹⁸⁰

Other RAC sections had to manage on smaller numbers and their activities are covered less often, sometimes only sporadically, in the company magazines. Archery, 'a sport long associated with the name of Nottingham' – appeared for the first time in 1949. By September membership stood at 38 with the management being credited for their generous contribution in the form of equipment and facilities.¹⁸¹ However, less than twelve months later indications were that 'membership has not been so keen this year' with an appeal going out to all Raleigh employees. Significantly, and repeatedly, the appeal was for 'the young ladies to come forward' and try their hand.¹⁸² Archery had been considered a suitable sport for women – especially middle-class women - since the late nineteenth century, along with lawn tennis and croquet; Tranter demonstrates that it was fashionable with 'elite female and college students'.¹⁸³ Of note here, however, is that previous studies of working-class sport have made no reference to archery. It seems possible, therefore, that the Raleigh archery club may have a particular section of the workforce in mind when they made their appeal. However, it seems more likely that archery at Raleigh was open to all. RAC section leaders might have had a particular grade of employee in mind when looking for new members but the reality was that numbers were important. By 1961 they were

¹⁸⁰ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.356.

¹⁸¹ NCRO, *Raligram*, , September, 1949, p.22.

¹⁸² NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/8, *Raligram*, August 1950, p.25.

¹⁸³ N. Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.80; see also P. Borsay, *A History of Leisure: the British Experience Since 1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.120.

increasing rapidly; this was partly due to the advent of outdoor shooting, although not every new recruit was able to maintain his enthusiasm. Under the persuasion of fellow workmates Terry Radford decided to give archery 'a go'. Soon, however, he recalled, 'I found I was losing as many arrows as I shot' so he decided to call it a day.¹⁸⁴ This brief episode highlights how the connection with a particular works sport could be a fleeting experience and that in making a decision to participate the influence of workmates was likely to be important.

Rifle shooting, as is the case for many sporting sections at Raleigh, appears to have been most popular in the years following World War Two. Membership figures are not reported in the company magazine, although comments indicate that numbers were growing year on year in the late 1940s and early 1950s. There was sufficient support to organise an inter-departmental league of eight teams in 1947 - Press Shop, Joinery and Head Office were among those competing.¹⁸⁵ The section was still functioning in 1962 when 'any member of the company interested in spending a couple of bob for a good night's shooting' was urged to contact T. B. Berrington of Laboratory. In addition and somewhat patronisingly, the column goes on to mention 'five regular lady members who are very good shots indeed', before adding 'who says shooting is a man's prerogative?'¹⁸⁶ Invariably section reports perpetuated stereotypes of women workers as being the weaker sex, routinely expressing surprise when any female competitor proved competent at an activity which was traditionally a male preserve. The rifle shooting section was still in

¹⁸⁴ Terry Radford Interview.

¹⁸⁵ NCRO, *Raligram*, March 1947, p.28.

¹⁸⁶ NCRO, *Raleigh Review*, Summer 1962, p.26.

business at the end of the period, *Raleigh Review* reporting in 1970 that a match against a team from another firm had recently been lost in the Shoulder to Shoulder League.¹⁸⁷

A number of indoor sports and games are mentioned intermittently in company literature. Darts, for example, 'provided some thrills' in 1947, but did not feature again until 1970 when the *Raleigh Review* mentioned an inter-departmental league.¹⁸⁸ Billiards, snooker, dominoes and cribbage are hinted at now and again. However, it would be unwise to infer from the paucity of coverage that these games activities were unpopular. Darts, as Patrick Chaplin observes, had become 'a cultural phenomenon in England in the 1930s', and it seems unlikely that its popularity did not extend to Raleigh employees in Nottingham. It seems likely that these activities may have been engaged with informally, especially in the context of a night out at one of Raleigh's social clubs where women darts players were more likely to be welcomed than in the heavily masculine environment of a pub. 'Outside the confines of the public house', Chaplin notes, 'women were afforded other opportunities to play darts' and there were few restrictions on women playing 'as an adjunct to works social functions'.¹⁸⁹ Thus it may simply be that darts was such a routine working-class activity and part of pub culture that it was under-reported.

A table-tennis section was first reported at about the same time as darts. An inter-departmental league was running by 1947 comprising predominantly teams representing

¹⁸⁷ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, Winter 1970.

¹⁸⁸ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/2, *Raligram*, 1947, p.22; DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, 1970.

¹⁸⁹ P. Chaplin, *Darts in England, 1900-39: a Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp.167, 180; see also Holt, *Sport and the British*, p.192.

office staff - drawing office, works export and export sales.¹⁹⁰ The finals of its 1949 tournament were held in the gymnasium with a host of high ranking officials looking on. Mr George Wilson, Managing Director was accompanied by 'Raleigh Directors and their wives, Executives and staff'. At the close 'Mr Wilson declared that it was a real pleasure to be present in company with his co-Directors' and he spoke warmly of the table-tennis section. Its story was 'a very happy one'; it was 'well organised and one of the happiest and best run sections in the R.A.C'.¹⁹¹ Some years later, however, the table-tennis section was struggling to recruit adequate numbers, for example 'it would not be true to say that our club membership was so encouraging'. League points had been forfeited when illness depleted numbers and teams had no reserves available to fill the gaps.¹⁹² It seems possible that table-tennis may have failed to attract significant support from workers on the shop-floor, being seen primarily as a sport favoured by white – collar workers, an impression that could only have been confirmed when the illustration below appeared in company literature.

¹⁹⁰ *Raligram*, March 1947, p.28.

¹⁹¹ NCRO, *Raligram*, DD/RN/8/1/5, 1949, p.27.

¹⁹² NCRO, *Raleigh Review*, Summer, 1962.



1:3: Raleigh Cycle Company, interdepartmental table tennis final 1954.

Source: NCRO, DD/RN/6/17/5.

The badminton section may well have been subject to similar difficulties when it came to recruitment. The 1949-50 season was blighted when 'one team scratched mid-season'.¹⁹³ During Terry Radford's time at Raleigh, from the mid -1950s through to the 1980s, it was seen primarily as an activity for the staff side.¹⁹⁴ There are hints here of what Heller refers to as 'social demarcation and masculinity issues'.¹⁹⁵ Administrative and clerical staff may well have been drawn towards badminton – and also the tennis and table-tennis sections because these activities allowed them to feel comfortable among people with similar status and social backgrounds. Moreover, it seems possible that these indoor sports were so clearly identifiable as activities for Raleigh's office staff, male and female, that shop-

¹⁹³ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/8, *Raligram*, August 1950, p.25.

¹⁹⁴ Terry Radford Interview.

¹⁹⁵ Heller, 'London clerks', 604.

floor workers were put off. At the close of the 1961-62 season more than forty players and friends attended 'finals night' where awards were presented for Men's Singles, Men's Doubles, Ladies' Singles and Mixed Doubles. The secretary reported that membership had 'increased considerably' during the season that had just finished, but numbers soon fell away.¹⁹⁶ A year later it was reported that 'owing to the loss of members we have not done very well in the league'.¹⁹⁷ Recruiting from a relatively narrow social base meant that this section was more vulnerable to this kind of problem than some others, such as cricket, for instance.

Boxing, a sport which would not have compromised the masculinity of working-class males at Raleigh in any way, flourished in the 1930s and 1940s, not just in terms of participation but as a spectator sport. That it became so important in the range of sports on offer owed much to the enthusiasm of G.C. Growcock, who was active in the RAC from 1927 onwards. Growcock's interest in amateur boxing led to the establishment of a tournament in 1938, involving boxers from Raleigh and other firms. The strength of boxing at Raleigh at this time attracted the attention of the local press, the *Nottingham Journal* running a feature under the heading 'Those Unbeatable Boxers'.¹⁹⁸ Whether this prompted potential boxers to the firm is doubtful but it does suggest that boxing at Raleigh was of a high standard. As secretary of the RAC's boxing section from the early 1940s Growcock initiated open-air bouts to aid the Troops Comforts Fund in 1944.¹⁹⁹ Later, in 1950, a tournament staged at the factory canteen attracted 1,200 spectators, including Mr. Wilson (Senior

¹⁹⁶ NCRO, *Raligram*, July 1961, p.26.

¹⁹⁷ NCRO, *Raleigh Review*, Summer 1962, p.22.

¹⁹⁸ *Nottingham Journal*, 9 April 1938.

¹⁹⁹ NCRO, DD/RN/4/86/13, *Press Cuttings*, Raleigh Cycle Company, 1948-49.

Director) and Mr. Clarkson (Works Director); 'the splendid attendance', it was noted, 'more than justified the support given by the management'.²⁰⁰ Thereafter, it seems likely that the boxing section went into decline. By 1960 boxing at Raleigh was at its lowest point and it was reported that 'the lack of active members has caused a temporary (we hope) shut-down of the section'. It seems that numbers had dwindled to the point that the section consisted essentially of 'two stars', Brian Jones and Wally Swift, both of whom eventually left the firm when they switched from the amateur to the professional ranks.²⁰¹ Swift, an assembler during his time at Raleigh, went on to win the British middleweight championship in 1964. Terry Radford, who had worked with Swift, recalled that 'me and a few of the lads' saw him win the title at the Ice Stadium; 'it was a fantastic night'.²⁰² However, by this time, amateur boxing at Raleigh appears to have disappeared, its decline reflecting diminishing working-class enthusiasm for boxing more generally in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁰³

Ironically for a company that was a world leader in bicycle production there is no mention in Raleigh company literature of a works cycling section, either as a sports or social club. However, evidence gathered from oral testimony indicates that there was a cycling track on the original sports ground on Western Boulevard: 'they had this cycling track and they used to have meetings and outside people used to come down'.²⁰⁴ Nottinghamshire Amateur Athletic Association held a Championship Sports Day at Raleigh's Ilkeston Road ground in 1929 and the programme included events such as a Half-Mile Cycle Handicap for a

²⁰⁰ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/7, DD/RN/8/1/7, *Raligram*, 1950, pp.24-25.

²⁰¹ *Raligram*, January 1960, p.27.

²⁰² Terry Radford Interview.

²⁰³ See Holt, *Sport and the British*, p.301.

²⁰⁴ NCL, Nottingham Oral History Project, A5a.

first prize of a tea set and tray, value £5.²⁰⁵ Sports Day in 1946 also seems to have included some cycle races for cash prizes.²⁰⁶ In these circumstances it seems quite likely that a Raleigh workers' cycling section may have existed, though there is no firm evidence to support this.

It is clear from the above survey, whatever the limitations of the company magazines in terms of systematic reporting, that male employees, including men of middle age, had access to a wide range of sporting activities provided under the RAC's umbrella. As we have seen, some sports were open to both men and women, though female involvement has been referred to sparingly to this point. The section that follows seeks to provide a brief but focused account on women's participation in sport at Raleigh.

Women and Sports Provision at Raleigh

In January 1927 the *Journal of Industrial Welfare* observed that 'probably large numbers of the general public think of Dick Kerr, Limited, of Preston, in terms of their Amazonian team of lady footballers, rather than as makers of electrical equipment'.²⁰⁷ The language reflected the patronising attitude which women footballers often had to endure. At the same time, however, this reference highlights the significant role that the workplace often played in the development of women's sport. It is clear that the First World War was an important watershed in this respect even if some of the advances made by women in sport during the years of conflict were later rolled back. Jane Humphries has claimed that 'the

²⁰⁵ NCRO, Nottinghamshire Amateur Athletic Association, Programme of Events for a Championship Sports Day, held at Raleigh Athletic Club Ground, 1929.

²⁰⁶ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/1, *Raligram*, March 1947, pp.26-27.

²⁰⁷ MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/9, *Journal of Industrial Welfare*, January 1927, p.14.

First World War acted as a 'dramatic interruption' of women's retreat into domesticity' and the popularity of women's football at the time underlines this point.²⁰⁸ More recently, Vicky Long and Hilary Marland have suggested that during the First World War and the years that immediately followed there were opportunities available to many factory girls which allowed them to participate in sports that had previously been beyond their reach.²⁰⁹ As Jean Williams has argued in relation to football:

*The combination of work outside the home and regular training, though perhaps initiated by welfare workers, meant that football took off as an enjoyable entertainment and relaxation. Women had blocks of identifiable leisure that had been 'earned' in public, sufficient colleagues to form teams and access to resources like pitches that would otherwise not have been available.*²¹⁰

In these circumstances, for female footballers, work and leisure were fused.

Women's sport at Raleigh reflected these developments in the war and post-war period. There is surviving photographic evidence of a women's football team in 1917/18, for example, but absence of coverage in company literature suggests little evidence of this activity in the interwar years.²¹¹ The Football Association's discouraging attitude, exemplified by a ban on women's teams using grounds of FA-affiliated clubs after 1921, was

²⁰⁸ J. Humphries, 'Women and Paid Work', in J. Purvis, (ed.) *Women's History : Britain 1850-1945* (Abingdon, Taylor & Francis, 1997), p. 89.

²⁰⁹ V. Long and H. Marland, 'From Danger and Motherhood to Health and Beauty: Health Advice for the Factory Girl in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 20 (4), 2009, 466.

²¹⁰ J. Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford, Berg, 2007), p.120.

²¹¹ Dr Jean Williams, De Montfort University, photograph collection.

probably a significant factor. Claire Langhamer further observes that, ‘there is clear evidence that the FA felt that football was an unsuitable game for women’.²¹² Jean Williams has discovered the existence of a female works team in Nottingham, Leys Ladies, who played between 1916 and 1922 before folding and it may be that women’s football at Raleigh followed the same course.²¹³ Evidence of women in South Wales playing football to raise money for charity during the 1930s, for example, suggests that it did not completely die out in the interwar period, despite adverse conditions.²¹⁴ However it is not until the late 1940s that there is any evidence of a revival at Raleigh (see illustration 1:4 below).

There is evidence to indicate that some women employees were playing football in the late 1940s, but it does not otherwise feature in the *Raligram* in the post-war years. A company-based team, the Raleigh All Golds were playing in the late 1970s, though conspicuous lack of success on the field - relegated to the third division of the East Midlands League after a season in which they had won only two games and scored a miserly nine goals – suggests that this team may have had a precarious existence.²¹⁵ As with men’s boxing it seems that enthusiasm for women’s football at Raleigh may have reflected a wider pattern outside the factory gates.

²¹² C. Langhamer, *Women’s Leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 82.

²¹³ J. Williams, *A Game for Rough Girls? A History of Women’s Football in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.32.

²¹⁴ See M. Johnes, *Soccer and Society: South Wales, 1900-1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 111

²¹⁵ NCRO, *Raleigh Review*, Christmas 1980, p.10.



1:4: Ladies football game at Raleigh Cycle Company, 1949

Source: NCRO, DD/RN/6/17/5.

Women's hockey did not have to overcome the same prejudices as women's football, having gained acceptance as a sport mainly for young middle-class women and schoolgirls in the late nineteenth century. Moreover, it had its own governing body, the All England Women's Hockey Association, founded in 1895, which ensured a high degree of autonomy.²¹⁶ It was certainly being played in and around Nottingham in the 1920s; Boots Athletic were reported to be fielding two teams in 1923.²¹⁷ It seems likely that there was a higher proportion of women workers at Boots than at Raleigh and this may explain why hockey did not make its mark there until after the Second World War. A report on the RAC's annual presentation evening in 1949 noted that a women's hockey section had been formed in 1945 and was well established after four years with membership standing at thirty.

²¹⁶ See Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes*, pp.212-13.

²¹⁷ *Nottingham Football Post*, 8 September 1923, p.16.

Notably the same report mentioned that ‘wedding bells’ would soon be ringing for Joan Walker, ‘our first team “right inner”’.²¹⁸

The number of women workers was increasing during the 1940s and 1950s and this would have helped the women’s hockey section to sustain its activities. At the same time, it has to be understood that an increasing proportion of the female workforce were married women with other responsibilities and interests away from their work and that a steadily-increasing proportion of them would be working part-time.²¹⁹ Women employed in administration at Raleigh were collectively known at this time, rather patronisingly, as ‘Miss Jenkins’ girls’, after their section manager.²²⁰ Few, however, would have remained ‘Miss Jenkins’ girls’ for more than a few years and this seems to have affected the viability of the women’s hockey section. In 1962, the section notes pointed out that ‘the need for new members is always great as we have to withstand a great deal of competition from the “stork” and thereby lose a number of our members each season’.²²¹ By 1970, the women’s hockey section had clearly ceased to be viable. It was reported that ‘the mixed hockey section gives the ladies at Raleigh the opportunity to play hockey on Sundays with members of the Men’s Saturday team, since there is no Ladies Hockey team at present’.²²²

The take-up of workplace welfare, including sports and social activities, by part-time workers is an interesting question which offers future research opportunities. Netball,

²¹⁸ NCRO, *Raligram*, March 1949, p.34.

²¹⁹ S. Brooke, ‘Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s’, *Journal of Social History*, 34 (1), 2001, 778.

²²⁰ V. Wood, ‘Women at Work in Nottingham’, p.53.

²²¹ NCRO, *Raleigh Review*, Summer 1962, p.25.

²²² NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-53, *Raleigh Review*, 1970.

another sport exclusive to women, may have suffered from some of the same difficulties experienced by the women's hockey section. It had been played at Raleigh before 1949 because a report in *Raligram* in September referred to the club reforming after a lapse of several years. Women workers were encouraged to join; 'a good game is guaranteed with a most friendly group of girls'.²²³ Eight months later, however, the news that Miss D. Burton had been chosen to represent the county junior team was accompanied by an appeal for 'a few more players', with a specific invitation extended to 'the girls in the factory shops'.²²⁴ This, in effect, advertises that the RAC netball section was open to women workers of all grades but also may indicate that shop-floor workers had not been coming forward, possibly thinking that the club was not for them.

In her pioneering work on women's recreation at Rowntree's works in the early twentieth century, Catriona Parratt concluded that class and occupation 'contoured the recreational experiences of the women employed at the factory'. She cited the Boating and Swimming Clubs who refused female members until the interwar period.²²⁵ In a similar vein Mike Huggins has made the important observation that class boundaries were often reproduced in leisure.²²⁶ Whilst there is no evidence that working-class women were formally excluded from any particular sporting activity at Raleigh, it may be significant that the player's workplace is never mentioned in the tennis section notes appearing in the

²²³ NCRO, *Raligram*, September 1949, p.24.

²²⁴ NCRO, *Raligram*, May 1950, p.27.

²²⁵ C. Parratt, '*More Than Mere Amusement*': *Working-Class Women's Leisure in England, 1750-1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), pp.210-211.

²²⁶ M. Huggins, 'Second- class citizens? English Middle-Class Culture and Sport, 1850-1910: a Reconsideration', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 17 (1), 2000, 4.

company magazine. This contrasts with section reports on football and cricket, for example, where men are clearly identified with the turnery, the paint shop, or wheel and frame. Indeed, Mike Huggins and Jack Williams have clearly illustrated that in the sport of tennis during the interwar period, 'clubs expressed middle-class identities and at the same time stressed the "otherness" of the working class'.²²⁷ The West Bridgeford Tennis Club, Nottingham, formed in 1885, had been able in 1921 to purchase the freehold lease on its grounds – with space enough for seven grass courts and four hard courts' – with money loaned by members.²²⁸ Such practical arrangements underpinned the sport's image as an activity for those who were well off. Terry Radford, when interviewed, could not recall a single colleague he had worked with at Raleigh, male or female, who had joined the tennis section. Tennis, he observed, 'seemed a bit snooty'.²²⁹ It seems likely that it appealed mainly to office and managerial staff.

Swimming, as Claire Langhamer has observed, was a 'cheap and accessible' activity in the inter-war period which provided opportunities for working-class women to keep fit and socialise.²³⁰ Moreover, as a photograph of the Players Athletic Girls swimmers, all young and slim, published in the *Nottingham Evening Post* in 1929 indicates, swimming was generally compatible with traditional images of femininity.²³¹ The swimming section at Raleigh invited all of 'our Belles and Buoys to come along' to the Noel Street baths where facilities had been secured for use by members for an annual subscription of 2s 6d (12.5p).

²²⁷ M. Huggins and J. Williams, *Sport and the English, 1918-1939* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.152.

²²⁸ *Nottingham Evening Post, Bygones Special*, 164, May 2010, p.8.

²²⁹ Terry Radford interview.

²³⁰ Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p.79.

²³¹ *Nottingham Evening Post*, September 1929, p.16.

The emphasis seems to have been on learning how to swim, rather than competitive swimming.²³² By 1962 the ladies swimming club had moved to the Radford baths with an emphasis, again, on learning to swim. It would seem from the available literature that swimming was very much a social event in as much that there is no evidence of competitive meetings, though these may have taken place. An annual dinner for the swimming club at Coach Road saw forty members and friends attend.²³³ It seems likely that the emphasis on learning – and hopefully improving – and on club social activities made this section attractive for women employees. This would mirror Fiona Skillen’s conclusions regarding the Ladies Swimming Club at Beardmore’s Parkhead Forge.²³⁴

Overall, the sports provision for women at Raleigh was less extensive than for men. In part this may simply reflect traditional male attitudes to women prevailing at a company where men predominated at both shop-floor and management levels. Even within the industrial welfare movement there was a reluctance to think outside the box in this respect. When a welfare fund was made available for workers in Yorkshire in the 1920s, for example, it was suggested that it should be used in part to fund ‘classes in domestic economy for girls’.²³⁵ Welfare experts were generally concerned to improve conditions of working life for women and at Raleigh it is clear that the role assigned to Miss Jenkins, for example, included finding living accommodation for some women employees; there was also a ‘Women’s

²³² NCRO, *Raligram*, March 1947, p.34.

²³³ NCRO, *Raleigh Review*, Summer 1962, p.26.

²³⁴ F. Skillen, “‘When women look their worst’: Women and Sports Participation in Interwar Scotland”, (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), p.146.

²³⁵ MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/4, *Journal of Industrial Welfare & Personnel Management*, April 1922, p.136.

Kiosk' in the factory to supply tickets for the canteen and other essential needs.²³⁶ At the same time, though there are good reasons to treat the evidence derived from works magazines with some care, there is a much unwitting testimony which suggests that women at Raleigh were working in an environment where they were often patronised. The football section in 1948 had 'hopes of persuading Miss Jenkins to kick off in the final match of the junior football season. We hear that she has been seen reading "Football is my Business", so she may even score with a flashing drive from the kick-off'.²³⁷ This, as well as the sheer weight of numbers, may help to explain why the provision of works-based sport at Raleigh was less extensive for women employees than for men and also why provision for women was more limited than it appears to have been at other local firms, such as Boots, as was certainly the case in the 1930s, though there was some improvement in the situation in the post-war period. Whether this situation implies lack of enthusiasm or interest on the part of the female workforce at Raleigh is difficult to determine. It also has to be remembered that there was an expectation that women workers, even if unmarried, would work at home, thus curtailing opportunities to pursue sport and other leisure activities whether based at the workplace or elsewhere.

Works Sport and the Wider Community

Though sport was an important component of the package of welfare provision at Raleigh it also served to advertise the company in various ways. Men's football was clearly the most popular sporting activity at Raleigh over the fifty-year period covered here, both for players

²³⁶ NCRO, *Raligram*, March 1947, p.29.

²³⁷ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/4, *Raligram*, 1948, p. 33. *Football is My Business* was the ghosted autobiography of England centre-forward Tommy Lawton, who had been signed by Notts County from Chelsea in 1947.

and spectators. When Autos beat Glazing 1-0 to win the Baker Trophy in 1949 a crowd of 600 was 'strung around every inch of the touchlines'.²³⁸ With interest in an internal inter-departmental competition at this level it was clear that there was a sufficiently strong player base at Raleigh for company teams to make a mark in local and regional leagues. The local sporting press supplies evidence of a Raleigh 'A' team competing in the Notts District League in the 1918-19 season.²³⁹ The label implies that there was at least one other team carrying Raleigh's name playing elsewhere. It was, however, during the mid-1930s that the Raleigh Athletic Football Club (RAFC) became a major power in local football. In 1936-7, as has already been noted, the senior team won the Notts Alliance, the county's premier league; at this time Raleigh had teams competing in each of the Notts Alliance's three divisions. Significantly, of the fourteen clubs in Division One, nine were works-based – Raleigh Athletic, Boots Athletic, Players Athletic, Ransome and Marles, Stanton Ironworks, Bestwood Colliery, Bilsthorpe Colliery, Rufford Colliery and Teversal Colliery.²⁴⁰ This was a reflection of the strength of works football generally in and around England's major industrial cities from the 1920s through to the 1960s. The Birmingham and District Works Amateur Football Association had 254 firms in membership in 1955, 'one of the great social achievements of Birmingham's industrial age'.²⁴¹ The important point here is that it would have seemed odd in the mid-twentieth century for a large industrial enterprise like Raleigh not to have been represented at this level.

²³⁸ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/5, *Raligram*, 1949, p.26.

²³⁹ *Nottingham Football Post*, January 1919, p.2.

²⁴⁰ *Nottingham Evening News*, December 1938

²⁴¹ S. Beauchampe and S. Inglis, *Played in Birmingham: Charting the Heritage of a City at Play* (Birmingham: English Heritage, 2006, p.79.

Martin Johnes research into football in South Wales has convincingly argued that 'some companies had ambitious plans for their teams that went far beyond any attempt to manipulate their employees'; Lovells, the Newport-based confectionary company, 'turned its club ... into a significant force in Welsh soccer', playing in the semi-professional Southern League.²⁴² Whether running a successful football team was an effective way of promoting a firm's image is difficult to prove one way or the other but, given the number of works-based teams carrying the name of a company, there were clearly some perceived benefits and there is evidence that Raleigh took works football very seriously at times. The oral testimony of Bill Hardy (born 1912) is important here because it suggests that he was offered employment at Raleigh largely on the strength of his ability as a footballer. Asked in his old age if he had any hobbies in his youth Hardy came up with the slightly odd combination of 'farming and football'. He went on to explain: "I was quite a good footballer in them days and Mr. Smith, I were telling you, [from] the Raleigh asked me to go and play football for them, so they found me a job and I went to work at the Raleigh".²⁴³ This suggests that there were occasions when having a winning team may have seemed more important than simply providing a form of recreation for the workforce.

This view is further supported by an article published in the *Nottingham Journal* in 1938 entitled 'Is Works Clubs Soccer Run on "Bread and Butter" Basis?', which argued that local amateur clubs were being adversely affected by the recruitment policy of works teams. The secretary of one amateur club claimed, 'I have been badly hit by works' clubs'; he had lost a number of players to works teams. 'Works' clubs may be a boon to leagues, but they

²⁴² Johnes, *Soccer and Society*, p. 104.

²⁴³ NCL, Nottingham Oral History Project, Bill Hardy, A109/a-b/1.

are anything but that to the small amateur clubs', he continued, '... all we ask is that they should play the game'. He blamed, in particular, 'those in minor executive positions, who utilise such positions to the end I am suggesting'. What he had in mind was offering jobs to players that works clubs were keen to sign and possibly the better facilities on offer at Boots, Players and Raleigh. The article concluded:

*I think perhaps the point that is very frequently lost sight of, is the fact that football, like all other sports in connection with works, was at the outset part of welfare schemes for the benefit of employees during their leisure hours, and has no direct connection with either his wages or the standard of a man's work.*²⁴⁴

The implication was that works football, at least at senior amateur level, was not simply part of the industrial welfare agenda. With Raleigh teams performing so well at the time it would be naïve to believe that they were entirely innocent of such practices. Ironically, only a year later, the *Nottingham Evening News* reported that the RAFC had lost many players that season owing to a shortage of work in the firm's various factories. Mr. Watson, the club secretary was defiant though, suggesting the team would 'come again'.²⁴⁵

Though football had the potential to make more impact, all sports could serve a useful purpose in helping to keep the firm's name before the public and the *Raligram* or *Raleigh Review* provided a means through which the company could acknowledge the

²⁴⁴ *Nottingham Journal*, 9 April, 1938.

²⁴⁵ *Nottingham Evening News*, 21 January 1939, p.8.

achievements of Raleigh employees. An article in 1962 headed 'Raleigh Team Reach T.I. Final' on the success of the tennis team in an inter-company competition, is typical of this kind of coverage.²⁴⁶ The efforts of the company magazine in this respect were augmented by the local press. In the 1930s, the *Nottingham Evening News* devoted a feature entitled 'Works Clubs Whisperings' offering news of works-based sports activities with the RAC featuring alongside Boots Athletic, Players Athletic, Johnson and Barnes, Ransome and Marles, Stanton Ironworks, Trent Motors, Viyella and numerous others.²⁴⁷ Aside from its function in terms of public relations, it was important, in a competitive local labour market that Raleigh should feature alongside other major employers.

Golf appears to have had a distinctive role among the numerous sports played at various times by Raleigh employees. Though it had only six members when it was formed in 1947, the golf section had grown to thirty members ten years later, playing various courses around the East Midlands. Based at the local Wollaton Park course, the golf section claimed to offer opportunities for healthy competition not only amongst Raleigh's own members but in matches against other golfing societies, 'thus creating good sport and good fellowship'; and it was no doubt pleasant to be able to play courses like the 'beautifully situated' Willersley Park at Ashby de la Zouch.²⁴⁸ Though there were about fifty municipal courses in England by the mid-1930s, golf was a relatively expensive sport and required a significant amount of free time. Golf undoubtedly became more democratic as its popularity spread along with growing affluence – there were about half a million players in the mid-1950s and this had doubled by the mid-1960s – participation rates in golf were closely linked to social

²⁴⁶ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, September 1962.

²⁴⁷ See for example *Nottingham Evening News*, 15 January 1938, p.6.

²⁴⁸ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1957, p.24.

class and occupation.²⁴⁹ At Raleigh the hierarchy within the firm was reflected in the relative social exclusivity of the golf section. In 1948 there were 'twenty enthusiastic golfers, including Raleigh Directors, Executives and Staff members'; the team was captained by Mr A. E. Simpson, Sales Director.²⁵⁰ However, it should be noted that shop-floor workers were not excluded; the 1956 winner of the club's Dunlop Trophy was Mr. Richardson of the Tube Shop, he is the only named winner of any golf section tournament whose place of work is specifically mentioned in the company magazine.²⁵¹ The way in which this event was reported seems to suggest that it was considered unusual. It should be acknowledged that golf courses had long functioned as places where businessmen could meet informally.²⁵² Thus matches and tournaments which brought Raleigh management into contact with their equivalents in other firms were probably regarded as serving a useful purpose in that respect. Robert Fitzgerald underlines this point when he notes that companies were keen to establish a good reputation for 'fair dealing' and 'financial rectitude'.²⁵³ What better place to demonstrate this to other businessmen than the golf course?

Social Provision: Music, Dancing and Fundraising

While it might be suggested that works-based sports and social activities can both be broadly classified as industrial welfare there were important differences. The social side of

²⁴⁹ Jones, *Workers at Play: a Social and Economic History of Leisure, 1918-39* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp.96-7; Holt and Mason, *Sport in Britain*, pp.7-8.

²⁵⁰ NCRO, DD/RN/8/1/4, *Raligram*, 1948, p.28.

²⁵¹ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1957, p.24.

²⁵² See Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes*, pp.139-40.

²⁵³ R. Fitzgerald, 'Employment Relations and Industrial Welfare in Britain: Business Ethics versus the Labour Market', *Business and Economic History*, 28 (2), 1999, 175.

company provision, as will be highlighted here, had a wider appeal to both men and women and also encompassed a wider age range. Thus, although there is much cross-over of activities it is important to acknowledge the full range on offer at Raleigh rather than simply focusing on sport, which tended – with some exceptions – to be taken up largely by younger men. It was natural that relationships made at work should be part of people's wider social life away from the factory. Employees who worked together often found themselves drinking together 'down the pub' or generally meeting socially outside working hours. By 1929, there were 2,626 clubs in Britain affiliated to the Working Men's Clubs and Institute's Union. Such clubs, as well as supplying beer, helped facilitate the wider provision of entertainment, leisure and games.²⁵⁴ It could be argued that large companies, like Raleigh, simply facilitated the innate sociability of its workforce through instituting its own social club and giving encouragement to spare-time activities in which workers might have participated anyway.

The Raleigh Athletic Social Club (RASC), which in effect was an arm of the RAC, was the focal point of much activity though Raleigh employees were free to use it in ways that suited them best. Terry Radford recalls how it acted as a meeting place where he and his workmates would enjoy a drink or two before embarking on a night out in Nottingham's local pubs and clubs demonstrating the seamless link between activity in the firm and that of the broader community, whilst also suggesting that they were happy to relax in each other's company in a works-related environment.²⁵⁵ It has been observed that working-class social life tended increasingly to move away from the home and immediate

²⁵⁴ Jones, *Workers at Play*, p. 71.

²⁵⁵ Terry Radford Interview

neighbourhood after the Second World War. Joanne Bourke found that in one working-class area of Liverpool in 1954 between twenty and forty per cent of residents migrated into other localities to participate in some form of leisure.²⁵⁶ It seems likely that the provision on offer at the Raleigh social club and the opportunities that came with it to take part in previously unavailable activities would have contributed to a shift of this kind with some workers choosing to enjoy a drink and a game of cards at the RASC rather than at their 'local'. Terry Richards, whose mother and father worked in the three-speed hub department, and who started work himself at Raleigh in 1962, recalled that the RASC at Radford 'was the very pulse and lifeblood of Radford itself'. He recalled that 'the lunchtime scene in the Social Club was one of hundreds of blue-overalled workers hastily drinking beer in a fog of laughter and cigarette smoke'. Moreover, the club linked Raleigh workers of different generations. His father continued to drink there after his retirement; 'some workers even came round to visit him each week ... and he was still part of the pools syndicate ten years after he had retired!' Significantly, these memories of the social club prompt Richards to recall 'the real Raleigh world, a world of sweat, grease, toil, laughter and camaraderie, just working people grafting together to produce the greatest bicycles the world has ever seen'.²⁵⁷ If it was the object of this aspect of industrial welfare policy to instil pride in working for Raleigh, it seems to have been effective.

There were, however, other ways of achieving the same effect. Dancing, as James Walvin has demonstrated, 'became a national pastime' during the 1920s and 1930s, sufficiently popular amongst the younger generation for new dances, like the Charleston, to

²⁵⁶ J. Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.143.

²⁵⁷ See 'Raleigh Factory Closure – Chris Richards'; at –

<http://www.homepage.ntlworld.com/catfoods/choppers/history/personal/html> , (accessed 7 March 2014).

spark a minor moral panic.²⁵⁸ This, however, did nothing to dent the popularity of dancing not least because '[much] the best opportunity for meeting members of the opposite sex was afforded by dances where a high proportion of young people found their lifelong partners'.²⁵⁹ Despite the competition of numerous other dance halls in and around Nottingham, the Raleigh Ballroom, situated on Lenton Boulevard, proved a popular attraction. Photographic evidence confirms the ballroom to have been a vast and opulent venue with an arched stage and a sweeping stairway leading to the upper tier, incorporated into Raleigh's new headquarters opened in 1931. (See illustration 1:5 below) Aside from regular dances and other functions, the ballroom was used for the Annual Christmas Dance, the social highlight of the year for many Raleigh employees and an opportunity to celebrate the firm's achievements while consolidating company loyalty. These occasions were marked by extravagant displays, such as a mechanised Santa Claus pedalling away on a Raleigh cycle as the guests danced around him. It was clear that Raleigh management were determined to ensure that workers and their guests would enjoy a night to remember while reminding them of what the company expected of them. The 1949 Christmas Party was typical. *Raligram* reported that 'this year's Christmas party ... was a grand party in every sense of the word. From 8.30 till the early hours of the morning tireless couples danced in the magnificent Raleigh Ballroom'; adding the important message that Mr George Wilson (Managing Director) 'congratulated all present on 1949's highly successful production efforts and voiced the hope and assurance that 1950 would bring even better results'.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ J. Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950*, Longman, 1978, p.136; see also M. Pugh, *We Danced all Night: a Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009), p.219.

²⁵⁹ Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, p.205.

²⁶⁰ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1950.



1:5: Raleigh Christmas Party 1949.

Source: NCRO, *Raligram*, Vol.2, No.9, January 1950.

Tom Parish, who worked at Raleigh from 1953 to 1982, has recalled how he became involved in social functions of this kind. For one Christmas party the directors had decided to hire someone from outside the firm to decorate the ballroom at a cost of £600. This provided an opportunity for Tom and some of his workmates from the toys division to offer to do the job for £200. Once he had made himself known to management in this way he was asked to 'MC for a lot of the department dances', which proved to be a profitable sideline: 'They used to give me a tenner, which was good because my weekly wage then was only

about £7.50 a week'.²⁶¹ What this suggests is that Raleigh management was prepared to make a significant investment in events considered good for morale but was open to input from the workforce when it came to organising such occasions. Decision-making in this area of welfare policy could be something of a two-way process. However, it seems clear that management was always keen to remain in control and use the event to get its message across. In this respect the parties and dances organised by a big company like Raleigh, which could attract thousands may have differed from those organised in connection with retail outlets, such as Boots for instance, where the number of guests was usually smaller and senior management were often absent.²⁶²

Chris Richards, recalling his time at Raleigh in the 1960s and 1970s, saw it 'not just as a factory but a little family contained within itself'.²⁶³ It is clear that fostering the idea of the firm as a family was an important aspect of industrial welfare and events put on for the children of Raleigh employees played an important part here. We have already seen how the RAC's Annual Sports Day started out life as a Children' Sports Day. Similarly, each December the Raleigh Ballroom was made ready for the Children's Christmas Party. As *Raligram* reported in 1950, 'their little eyes nearly popped out of their heads as they gazed open-mouthed at the dazzling display of decorations'; adding that 'the success of the occasion reflects the highest credit on the Christmas Party Committee'.²⁶⁴ During the 1960s and 1970s Terry Radford remembers with fondness his children looking forward to the

²⁶¹ *Nottingham Evening Post, Bygones*, Issue 50, March 2010, p.22.

²⁶² NCL, *The Bee*, February 1931, p.106; for reports of staff Christmas parties at Boots shops in Lincoln and Monmouth.

²⁶³ 'Raleigh factory Closure – Chris Richards'.

²⁶⁴ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1950.

Christmas party. Moreover, it was an event which clearly reflected well on his employers. There was 'plenty of food, a visit from Santa Claus and a present to take home at the end of the day. The firm really looked after the kiddies'.²⁶⁵ This, then, was the paternalistic side of company welfare; it was an occasion to be enjoyed by workers and their families and underpinned the idea that to work at Raleigh was to be part of an extended family. Griffiths further bolsters this argument when he noted that children of employees at Lever Brothers, Port Sunlight, annually went for Christmas tea at the home of Lord Leverhulme where they were presented with a book as a gift. 'It was perhaps inevitable' he notes, 'that the expectation developed that if you were a Port Sunlight child you would work at the factory'.²⁶⁶ This might be taking things a little too far at Raleigh though it was not unusual to find different generations of the same family employed by the firm, but children's activities did create a 'family' atmosphere and help to ensure that potential Raleigh workers of the future were familiar with company traditions and culture. It should be also noted that there was an 'Over 60 Club' which was well entertained by the very popular choral society at its 1956 Christmas party at the Radford Community Centre. The aim, it was reported, was "bringing joy and comfort to the various Institutions where the Raleigh Choir has made a big impression and their visits are always welcome".²⁶⁷

As far as large companies like Raleigh were concerned an active choral society was a huge asset. Its members numbered both men and women and, unlike some sports, advancing years were no barrier to participation. Simon Phillips, in his groundbreaking

²⁶⁵ Terry Radford Interview.

²⁶⁶ J. Griffiths, 'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy ...': the Rites and Rituals of Company Life at Lever Brothers, c.1900-c.1990', *Business History*, 37, (4), 1995, 34.

²⁶⁷ NCRO, *Raligram*, February 1956, p.25.

study of industrial welfare at Boots, noted that both the Glee Club and the Choral Society entertained at in-house events, such as on the annual outing, as well as raising the external profile of the company through entering local and national competitions.²⁶⁸ The Raleigh Choral Society fulfilled a very similar role. Aside from providing entertainment for the firm's Over 60s Club, it engaged with the local community through giving concerts in aid of local charities. Between September 1960 and July 1961 there were a total of fourteen such concerts which helped to raise money for good causes such as the Harlow Wood Hospital, Highbury Vale Old Folks Home, the Over-60 Club Cancer Fund and the Cripples Home Fund.²⁶⁹ It is clear that the Raleigh Choral Society was steeped in a tradition of philanthropic welfare and that its activities demanded a significant commitment from members. It was reported in 1960 that the choir consisted of 14 sopranos, 10 contraltos, 4 tenors and 7 bass. The aim, however, was to achieve a total membership of 44 in order to counter sickness and unavailability throughout the season, thus still being 'able to uphold our standard'.²⁷⁰ Even when on a day out, the choristers remembered their obligation to charity. In 1957 their Annual Outing headed for the Cotswolds, stopping off at Worcester, the Malvern Hills, Broadway, Stow-on-the-Wold, with tea taken at the Cotswold Cafe at Morton-in-Marsh. However, this trip was imbued with a more philanthropic element. Whilst in the Cotswolds, however, the Choral Society also fulfilled an engagement to take part in a concert in aid of the Council of Refuge Aid Fund.²⁷¹

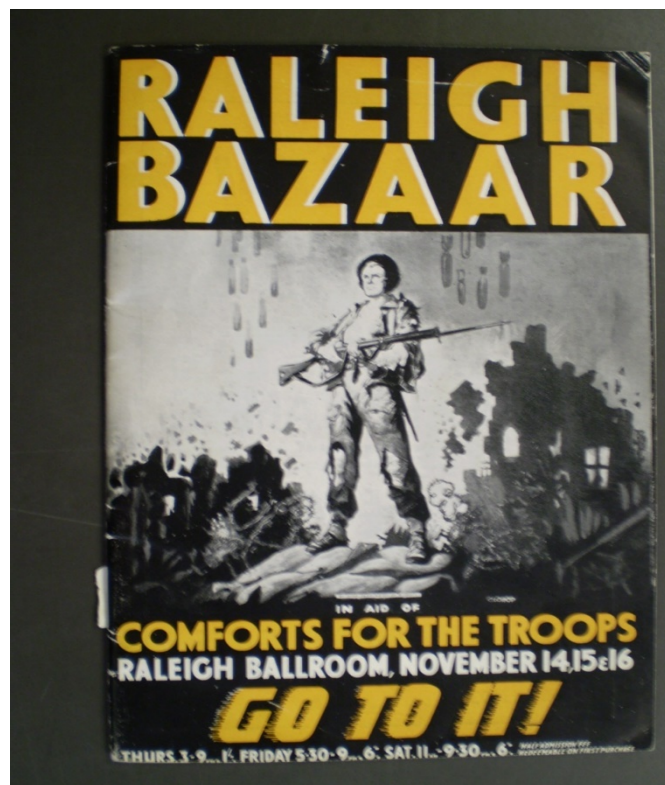
²⁶⁸ Philips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at Boots', p.244.

²⁶⁹ NCRO, *Raligram*, July 1961, p.27.

²⁷⁰ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1960, p.29.

²⁷¹ NCRO, *Raligram*, July 1957, p.30.

Engagement with charities went back at least as far as the Second World War when the company threw itself behind a fundraising drive in aid of Comforts for the Troops. The 'Raleigh Bazaar' was held over three days in the ballroom and a twenty-page brochure was printed highlighting the various entertainments on offer. Strikingly the front cover displayed a war ravaged soldier, defiant and steadfast as bombs dropped all around him (see illustration 1:6 below). Could Raleigh's workforce show the same devotion in their war efforts?



1:6: Raleigh Bazaar Brochure, n.d.

Source: NCRO, DD/RN/12/6.

The Raleigh management made it clear what was expected with a message from Mr H.G. B. Wilson (Managing Director) -

Of all the factors which emerge from the war, one thing must strike us all most forcibly, the appalling waste of everything we have valued and tried to build up; waste of life, materials, energy, money. To counteract this each one of use must pay increased prices for luxuries and necessities alike, and each must readily contribute to causes that demand support for the alleviation of suffering and hardship caused by the war.

The bazaar featured various games and entertainments ranging from Hoopla and Rolling Pennies with comedy from 'The Mirth of the Nation' (Sergeant 'Wally' Whitburn) and 'The IGH 'ATS', Raleigh's Air Training Corps (ATS) quintet.²⁷² At a company committed to industrial welfare, like Raleigh, it seems likely that such an event served more than one purpose; it associated the firm with a patriotic good cause while helping to keep up the morale of the workforce. The welfare of women workers was a particular concern at this time. In a revealing and insightful article *The Journal of Industrial Welfare* addressed the demands made on women workers in wartime; some 'were suffering in one form or another from nervous strain, and breakdown appeared inevitable'.²⁷³ It was important, therefore, that a fund-raising event should be tied in with fun and recreation rather than simply imposing an additional burden. Fund-raising for charities simply continued into the immediate post war period and beyond. The company magazine heaped praise on those who had contributed £4,087 to the Nottingham and Notts Hospital Fund in 1947.²⁷⁴ The efforts of the Choral Society in the 1960s were, therefore part of an established tradition.

²⁷² NCRO, DD/RN/12/6, *Raleigh Bazaar Programme*,

²⁷³ MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/25, *Journal of Industrial Welfare*, January/February 1943, p.23.

²⁷⁴ NCRO, *Raligram*, DD/RN/8/1/3, 1948, p.24.

Finally, it should be noted that Raleigh management were well aware that the provision of entertainment at all levels was important to the way in which it conducted business. Just as it was prepared to allocate significant funding to its industrial welfare activities, whether they came under the headings of 'sport' or 'social', they also spent lavishly on entertainment in pursuit of better relations with suppliers and customers. A dance and cabaret at the Lyceum Ballroom in London in 1949 allowed the company to entertain 'their dealer friends' in some style. The programme printed for the event took the form of a glossy brochure which added to the image of a successful and rewarding firm eager to strengthen its ties with those in the cycle trade. Of course this was an evening for the senior levels of management at the company, one in which conversation could 'ebb and flow' between business and leisure with like minded guests. An event of this kind served much the same purpose a golf tournament did in facilitating business.

Trips, Outings and Visits

Before the First World War, James Walvin has argued that, industrial workers wishing to visit the seaside had to find ways of saving for it from their weekly wages. For most workers, especially those with families to feed, this was difficult. The post war years however, ushered in a slow-moving trend towards paid holidays in a number of firms.²⁷⁵ Indeed, by the end of the inter-war period the government had introduced the Holidays with Pay Act (1938) entitling a worker to one week's paid leave *per annum*. The intention was that some eleven million British workers could benefit from this act from June 1939.²⁷⁶ Until these developments, however, there were relatively few opportunities for workers to

²⁷⁵ Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, pp.80-81.

²⁷⁶ Pugh, *We Danced all Night*, p.234.

take a day's rest and recreation at a distance from the urban environment in which they lived. *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, 1935, made the point that only about half of those working in London took an annual holiday, with large numbers of working-class people having 'to be content with day outings on Bank Holidays or Sundays'.²⁷⁷ This is significant on two levels. Firstly, it indicates that, even into the mid-1930s, a day out was still an unaffordable treat for many; secondly it helps to explain the importance of works outings, paid for – or at least subsidised – by the firm, as part of industrial welfare provision.

In this context, the annual works outing came to have a huge significance in the context of employer-employee relations. Significantly, they appear to have become a feature of industrial life in the 1920s. Stephen Jones's research has revealed that Lancashire mill workers were taken on outings to Blackpool, Morecambe, Harrogate, Scarborough and Liverpool. The management at both Wellington and Fir Mill 'presented each operative with a free ticket to Blackpool; the Victoria Mill in Leigh, issued 700 railway tickets to their employees for their trip to Southport. Fir Mill also gave its workers five shillings spending money to ensure that they could make the most of their day'.²⁷⁸ At Raleigh, the annual works outing dated from the same period. One former employee who started work with the company in August 1923 clearly recalled day trips to Blackpool, London and Scarborough. The entire factory would close down and Raleigh men and women would embark at Nottingham railway station, sometimes as early as 4.30 – 5.00am, on one of the six or seven

²⁷⁷ H. Llewellyn Smith, *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, Vol. IX, *Life and Leisure* (London: P.S. King and Son, 1935), p.86.

²⁷⁸ S.G. Jones, 'The Survival of Industrial Paternalism in the Cotton Districts: a View From The 1920s', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 7, 1987, 5.

special trains that the company had hired for the day.²⁷⁹ It was important, no doubt, that Raleigh should be able to match what was offered by other local employers and Boots, for example, was arranging day trips by train to the seaside for its workforce from about the same time.²⁸⁰

Given the symbolic significance of the event it will be useful to consider one annual works outing in some detail. The Raleigh outing to Blackpool in the summer of 1949 represented an impressive feat of organisation by any firm's standards. Ten trains carried 5,000 'happy Raleighites' from Nottingham to the Lancashire coast and back in what was claimed to be the biggest works outing organised in Britain since the war. According to *Raligram*, which always liked to stress company togetherness, 'everyone was there, from the Managing Director to Works Messengers'. The stationmaster at Nottingham, Mr. G. H. Rogers, observed that, aside from wartime troop movements, this was the largest peacetime outing he had ever handled. When they arrived in Blackpool the visitors were given a civic reception. Councillor Fairhurst and the Deputy Mayor were photographed warmly greeting Mr. George Wilson and his co-Directors; clearly the arrival of such a large party was more than welcome in what was still an era of post-war austerity. In addition, 'History was made' when it reported that the *Nottingham Evening News*, who had printed a full account of the day's activities, flew 5,000 copies of the paper up to Blackpool so employees could read about themselves on their journey home.²⁸¹ However Raleigh workers chose to spend their time while in Blackpool – and there is nothing to suggest that they spent it differently than millions of other visitors had done over the years – they were

²⁷⁹ NCL, *Nottingham Oral History Project*, A5a.

²⁸⁰ NCL, *The Bee*, September 1924, p.4, for details of a Boots day trip to Southend-on-Sea.

²⁸¹ NCRO, *Raligram*, September 1949, pp. 38-39.

left in no doubt that they worked for a company that was important and well regarded and that their annual outing was considered an item of immense newsworthiness back in their home town. Large manufacturing firms helped to create a sense of local and regional identity and events such as this conveyed the message that Raleigh and Nottingham were virtually synonymous. No doubt this all added to the enjoyment of the day.

The 1940s and 1950s proved to be the heyday as far as Raleigh's works outings were concerned. No effort was spared to ensure that it was an enjoyable and memorable occasion. Jeremy Crump, writing about works-based recreation in Coventry, has emphasised that works outings were more often than not paid for by the workers themselves whilst 'top management did not accompany the trips'.²⁸² If this was so, Raleigh workers could only have been impressed by the company's generosity. This even extended to retired employees. Raleigh also organised a 'Pensioners' Outing'. A booklet produced before the 1954 trip mapped out the day's itinerary. After meeting at Lenton Boulevard at 9.00am, the first stop was Melton Mowbray, where pork pie was to be sampled. Continuing the journey, stops were made at Oakham, Stamford and Peterborough, where lunch was taken, along with visits to the cathedral and River Nene. The afternoon saw the pensioners take in a medieval bridge and the tulip fields followed by tea on the River Welland at Spalding. Two churches, one in Donnington the other in Grantham, were visited in the early evening before returning to Nottingham for 8.30pm.²⁸³ Maybe it lacked the excitement of a day out for 5,000 in Blackpool, but it was a significant undertaking nonetheless.

²⁸² J. Crump, 'Recreation in Coventry between the Wars', in B. Lancaster & T. Mason, (eds.) *Life and Labour in a Twentieth-Century City: the Experience of Coventry* (Coventry: Cryfield Press, 1986), p.270.

²⁸³ NCRO, DD/RN/12/38, Raleigh Cycles Ltd., *Pensioners' Outing Programme*, 1954.

Taking a day out together could also be an important aspect of individual section activities. Indeed, outings and trips for the Photographic Club at Raleigh were central to its very existence. This section had its own designated Outings Secretary who mapped out the forthcoming programme of events which in the summer of 1949 included visits to local beauty spots and places of interest such as Woodhouse Eaves, Lichfield and Dovedale. A group photograph taken on a trip to the Manifold Valley, published in *Raligram*, is very suggestive of the period. 'Taking photographs of the trips that the internal combustion engine had made possible', as Richard Holt has observed, 'completed the "brave new world" of domestic technology', supplying 'innumerable "snaps" of smiling faces and celebrated "beauty spots"'.²⁸⁴ The Manifold Valley photograph conveys a rather homely and contented bunch of people, not unlike a large family photograph at a wedding or party.²⁸⁵ This 'snapshot', then, is a momentary 'footprint' for workers of their time at Raleigh and the people they worked with at the firm; it is indicative of the communal bond that is emphasised so much in company literature. Significantly, the works outing to Blackpool in 1949 was used as the setting for the photographic section's annual competition. The first prize went to Mr Rudd from the millwrights department, beating Mr Stephenson of the hardening department into second place.²⁸⁶ What is important here is the cross-over of social events and organisations. Clubs and societies did not exist in total isolation but were part of a broader canvas of leisure provision and effectively buttressed Raleigh's industrial welfare strategy.

²⁸⁴ Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 199.

²⁸⁵ NCRO, *Raligram*, September 1949, pp. 24-25.

²⁸⁶ NCRO, *Raligram*, September 1949, pp. 24-25.

However, the great annual festivals were about to come to an end. Terry Radford recalling one of his works outings in the 1950s, he remembers 'we received a pack of sandwiches and 15 shillings in an envelope'.²⁸⁷ Looking back Terry Radford lamented that the 1958 trip coincided with a period when he was off work, unfortunately this was to be the last time 'this particular perk' was on offer.²⁸⁸ Another former Raleigh employee, C.T. Arnold, who worked for the firm between 1943 and 1989, remembered that 'things began to change ... the trips stopped and it wasn't the same any more'.²⁸⁹ Smaller departmental trips remained, but the yearly mass exodus was not revived. With rising affluence in the 1950s and early 1960s and more working-class families having a car of their own and even beginning to venture abroad for holidays, a day out by train with thousands of others became less attractive.

Other Social and Sociable Recreations

We have seen how it was possible to pursue a wide range of sports activities offered by the various sections of the RAC. The range of non-sporting activities open to Raleigh workers was even wider, embracing amateur dramatics, music, gardening, photography, bridge, chess and mountaineering, not to mention breeding and showing caged birds. Moreover, these activities were often likely to appeal equally or more to women rather than men or to older rather than younger workers, thus increasing the reach of works-based recreational provision. It is easy to see why the company would be so pleased to support an activity like amateur dramatics. Firstly, the Raleigh Players, described as a 'flourishing

²⁸⁷ Terry Radford Interview.

²⁸⁸ *Lenton Times*, Issue No.23

²⁸⁹ *Nottingham Evening Post, Bygones*, 50, March 2010, p.13.

society' with forty members in 1970, was well known in local theatrical circles; its Christmas 'panto', *Aladdin* in 1971, for example, offered a seasonal entertainment open to the general public and thus – like the Choral Society - helped make Raleigh more visible in the local community. There were also spin-offs for the company in supporting an activity which was popular with many of its staff, not simply on account of its well-regarded productions but also because it provided an opportunity to socialise; its 'post-production celebrations' were famous. It was the stated aim of the Raleigh Players to 'promote amateur theatre and to offer its members opportunities for acting as well as experience in the technicalities of staging a play'. To this end meetings were held weekly in the Management Dining Room, an indication that this section probably appealed mainly to office staff. After poetry reading and lessons in fencing or lighting a set, there were attempts 'to drink Coach Road dry'.²⁹⁰ Though drinking and socialising were often integral to section activities it had long been recognised that the company might benefit indirectly from the informal training and the experience of teamwork that they often provided. A proposal to set up a Welfare Club at Boots in Manchester in the 1920s had been justified partly because it would seek 'to encourage team spirit ... both at business and in leisure', for example.²⁹¹ Amateur dramatics could always be justified in these terms – members of the company had to multi-task, acquire new skills and apply skills they already had in order to put on a show for the public.

Other recreational activities – cage bird, gardening, bridge and chess, for example, were more private and required little in the way of direct assistance through the use of company facilities. Here Raleigh's interest in what workers did in their spare time requires a

²⁹⁰ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, 1970.

²⁹¹ NCL, *The Beacon*, Christmas 1924, p.181.

different explanation. The fascination of racing pigeons for working-class men is well known and has recently attracted the attention of cultural historians. Working-class men, it has been suggested, sometimes found a kind of emotional release in caring for a bird that was not open to them in other aspects of their lives where displays of affection might be regarded as sentimental and a sign of weakness.²⁹² Caged birds, an enduring and popular hobby for working-class men and boys may have fulfilled the same function. Caged bird societies were to be found everywhere in Britain from Bournemouth to the Orkneys and shows were often highly competitive. One of the problems of relying on section notes in company magazines is that the evidence for the existence of a particular society is often quite patchy and information relating to the Raleigh Caged Bird Society, appropriately led by a Mr Quail, is only available for the period 1956-62. We are left, therefore, in the dark as to this society's earlier history, if indeed it had one. It seems likely that it did since numbers of entries for the Annual Members' Show, even allowing for multiple entries across the different classes, suggest that this society was well supported; there were 127 entries in 1956, 435 in 1959 and 350 in 1962.²⁹³

Photographic images in the *Raligram* give the impression that the society largely comprised of middle-aged men; indeed, the section notes for 1956 close with a plea from the secretary, 'let's have some more ladies for whom we wish to form a special section'.²⁹⁴ There is no evidence of such a section getting off the ground at Raleigh, even though 'ladies' played a part in this small world elsewhere. At the Bournemouth Cage Bird Society, for

²⁹² See M. Johnes, 'Pigeon Racing and Working-Class Culture in Britain, c1870-1950', *Cultural and Social History*, 4 (3), 2007, 361-83,

²⁹³ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1960, pp.28-29.

²⁹⁴ NCRO, *Raligram*, February 1956, p.25.

example, 'ladies were very evident in exhibiting birds and were greatly valued members of the club'.²⁹⁵ It seems likely that the predominantly working-class male ambience prevailing at Raleigh in Nottingham was less encouraging and there is little to suggest that women took an interest.

One of the marked characteristics associated with the rising affluence of the 1950s and 1960s was that leisure became progressively more home-centred and this was reflected in the interests pursued by Raleigh workers. Horticulture, whether pursued at home or on an allotment, did not appear to require the company to intervene directly and the Horticultural Society seems to have an element of the co-operative about it. The annual Flower and Vegetable Show, held at Coach Road, served a purpose in providing a meeting place for those Raleigh workers with 'green fingers'. That this event was open to the public meant that it provided yet another opportunity for the company to put its benign face on display and cultivate local goodwill. There was, as with the Angling Club, a practical reason why workers might join the Horticultural Society. An in-house store had been set up to meet the needs of members and the section notes in 1971 advised anyone in need of gardening requisites to call in; '... before you go running out and buying from anyone else, just cast your eye over the highly competitive prices offered'.²⁹⁶ Of course, there was nothing to prevent Raleigh employees from gardening independently and, as this activity had of necessity to take place away from the works, it seems likely that some would have done this, perhaps associating themselves with the Horticultural Society only because they wanted to enter a prize specimen for the show or take advantage of the low prices in the

²⁹⁵ See www.bournemouthcagebirdclub.co.uk, (accessed 24 June 2010).

²⁹⁶ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-5, *Raleigh Review*, Spring 1971.

store. Section notes often invited workers to be instrumental in their relationships with the various Raleigh clubs. A brief item headed 'Outdoor Pursuits' in 1971 invited readers to try out mountaineering. What is more, the club was prepared to loan suitable clothing and boots so that participants 'don't have to go to a lot of expense before deciding whether or not they like the sport'.²⁹⁷

Additional activities of note at Raleigh in the post-war period included chess and bridge. These sedentary pastimes appealed to a surprisingly broad range of employees, both male and female, and of all age groups. Most certainly physical alertness was not at a premium, although mental agility may have proved more beneficial. Jean Williams original research has demonstrated that bridge was 'a game that could be played at an advanced age' whilst it lent itself to conviviality and provided a 'social round'.²⁹⁸ There was a notable bridge tradition in Nottingham into which players at Raleigh could fit; the Nottinghamshire Contract Bridge Association could trace its history back to 1937, with one club historian claiming that it was 'perhaps the oldest in the country'.²⁹⁹ Raleigh's Bridge Society reported in 1949 that 'so great has been the interest shown in Bridge playing, that efforts will be made to arrange matches with local concerns ... also a Club Championship Competition'.³⁰⁰ Prints of the Bridge Club in action produced in *Raligram* tend to re-enforce an image of middle-class restraint in line with the game's 'social conventions and cultural meanings'.³⁰¹ It appears to have been favoured by women in general, who, in the post-war years, were

²⁹⁷ NCRO, DD/RN/8/2/1-54, *Raleigh Review*, 1970.

²⁹⁸ J. Williams, 'Frisky and Bitchy: Unlikely British Olympic Heroes?' *Sport in History*, 30, (2), 2010, 258.

²⁹⁹ www.nottinghambridgeclub.org.uk, (accessed 10 August 2010).

³⁰⁰ *Raligram*, Vol. 2, No.8, September 1949, p.22

³⁰¹ Williams, 'Frisky and Bitchy', 257.

instructed by a rather stern looking Miss Chapman, sister of Mr. J. T. Chapman, a former Sales Manager for Raleigh's South African subsidiary.³⁰² From a factory worker's perspective this and the general ambience of the club as portrayed in the late 1940s was suggestive of middle-class exclusivity; it was almost a gentleman's club, but with ladies. However, by the early 1960s this seems to have changed with new members being welcomed to sessions held every Tuesday night in the works canteen. The possibility of a match against West Bridgford British Legion was also mentioned, not an especially socially-exclusive venue.

Chess was first given a formal setting in October 1959 when an inaugural meeting took place in the staff canteen and a chairman, treasurer, secretary and committee were duly voted in. Anyone interested in joining the club was urged to come along whether a player or non-player.³⁰³ Within two years the club had progressed markedly with 'pleasant outings' to play chess at Players, Boots, Nottingham University and Nottingham Mechanics Institute. In addition, the club had entered the second division of the Notts Chess League, which provided additional fixtures with the likes of Jessop's and Electricity. However, despite the club's motto – 'Once a player, always a player, age no deterrent' – it seems likely, however, that chess remained very much a minority interest. *Raligram* section notes in 1961 appealed for new recruits to come forward; 'we know there are some good players in the factory, so come along when we start our winter session'.³⁰⁴ A year later it was

³⁰² *Raligram*, Vo.2, No. 7, March 1949, p.35

³⁰³ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1960, p.28.

³⁰⁴ NCRO, *Raligram*, July 1961, p.27.

admitted that 'we are rather short of players, owing to nights and shift work' whilst younger players tended to prioritise evening class commitments ahead of chess.³⁰⁵

It seems unlikely that anyone would have been attracted to employment at Raleigh mainly because it provided an opportunity to pursue an interest in caged birds, gardening, bridge or chess. Wages, prospects for promotion and working conditions generally were almost certainly more important factors when it came to recruitment, though those who found companionship in the various clubs and societies may possibly have found that it gave them a reason to stay. However, by rubber stamping the various sections, sporting and social, that gathered together under the Raleigh umbrella, the company was able to send out an important signal of approval about the kind of employee they valued, somebody who got on with the people they worked with and used their time productively.

Conclusions

Making an important point Jeremy Crump has noted of workers at Courtaulds and GEC in interwar Coventry that 'many did not join their firm's social club, or ... make use of the facilities'.³⁰⁶ At Raleigh, though an event such as the annual works outing or Christmas party were undoubtedly very popular over a long period, the number of workers in the various clubs or sections was often quite modest given that the workforce was numbered in thousands when the firm was in its mid-twentieth century prime. Moreover, oral testimony, like that supplied by Terry Radford, suggests that the attitude of workers towards the work-based recreation on offer was that they were simply 'dipped' into now and then, as with his brief experience of archery, whilst for some, works teams and social clubs became an

³⁰⁵ NCRO, *Raligram*, January 1962, p.23.

³⁰⁶ J. Crump, 'Recreation in Coventry between the Wars', p.273.

integral part of their working lives. Terry claimed that he had gone to work at Raleigh because his mum worked there, even though he knew that he could earn more money at Players. Significantly, he considered that the sports and social provision available at the company was an aspect of works life that many took for granted; it was 'no more than we expected at a big company'.³⁰⁷ This implies that the sports and social aspect of social welfare would have mattered to workers if it had been absent, a theme that will be explored further in the other case study chapters.

Certainly, it is important not to overstate the case for the importance of works-based recreational provision and this means treating sources like *Raligram* and the *Raleigh Review* critically. As early as 1921 the *Journal of Industrial Welfare* had published an article entitled 'Some Criticisms of the Works Magazine'. Attention was focused on the element of organisational control of such matters, illustrated by the following extract, 'some members [of the IWS] ... develop a "pride of firm" so keenly that they wish to run a magazine that shall bear its name. More than that, they are determined that it shall be written and edited and published by themselves'.³⁰⁸ In general, company literature reported the positive and ignored the negative and, though it is clear that there were a large number of sporting and other activities on offer at Raleigh there are significant gaps in the evidence, for example, there are few in-house magazines available for the interwar period when the industrial welfare movement was especially influential. Moreover, such sources provided more evidence of success than failure. Section notes offer snapshots of activity compiled by those

³⁰⁷ Terry Radford Interview.

³⁰⁸ MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/3, *Journal of Industrial Welfare*, May 1921, p.243.

who were enthusiastic enough to take on the role of secretary and who were more than likely to accentuate the positive.

Even with these reservations, however, there is sufficient evidence to make the case that the sports and social side was a highly visible and significant feature of Raleigh works culture between the 1920s and the 1970s. It is just as important to stress, however that the company's owners and managers believed that it should be so. This was especially evident in the significant resources allocated to providing extensive and expensive facilities, like the sports ground at Coach Road and the Raleigh Ballroom. As one director observed in 1950, 'sports were vitally important, in that they fostered the spirit of competition and sportsmanship so valuable in work and play'.³⁰⁹ That this sentiment became an article of faith underpinned the rationale for spending large sums of money on the RASC grounds at Coach Road and allowing the company's talented footballers and cricketers time off to train and compete, a practice which Terry Radford recalled from the late 1950s and 1960s.³¹⁰ It also underlines the point that recreational activities which were popular generally – football and dancing, for example – were more likely to be well-supported by Raleigh employees and to receive favourable treatment.

There was clearly an element of 'top-down' provision at Raleigh in that the company encouraged certain kinds of activity by making available facilities which workers were unlikely to access in any other way. However, a few footballers aside, there is little evidence that Raleigh management at any level attempted to coerce employees into active participation in the company's sports and social activities. It seems highly unlikely that the

³⁰⁹ *Raligram*, DD/RN/8/1/5, 1950, p.26

³¹⁰ Terry Radford Interview

industrial welfare department would have deliberately set out to sell bridge, chess or mountaineering – let alone cage birds - to the workforce as a matter of company policy. More likely, the management, in relation to the plethora of clubs and societies, simply responded in the best way that it could to suggestions from below, more of a 'bottom-up' process. It was a way of showing goodwill and there were perceived to be benefits in encouraging workers to take up healthy or interesting pursuits outside working hours. Encouraging many of these activities cost the company virtually nothing aside from making a room available and so modest outlay in this direction was justified. For the football team to win the Notts Alliance in the late 1930s drew a certain amount of attention and added to the company's prestige, at least in and around Nottingham, and provided a focus for those who wanted to identify themselves with the company through sport, even though such benefits were difficult to measure. The testimony of retired Boots workers, such as those who gathered at the Trent Bridge Institute in 1961 for the Annual Combined Party for Retired Staff from Nottingham, Leicester and Derby, is significant. At the close, it was reported, Mr. W. C. Jarvis 'voiced the guests' thanks to Mr. Norman and the company, which they had been proud to serve'.³¹¹ Maybe this was the language of nostalgia and yearning for 'the old days' but it expressed loyalty towards the firm and a genuine affection for their place of work that stayed with them throughout their lives. It is important to note here – and oral testimony tends to confirm this - that many retired Raleigh workers probably felt the same.

³¹¹ NCL, *The Bee*, February 1962, p. 30.

Chapter 3

Robinson & Sons Ltd, Chesterfield

*The objects of the club shall be to promote the intellectual, social and physical welfare of the employees of Robinson and Son Ltd, by providing opportunities for social intercourse, indoor and outdoor recreation, etc, and generally to foster a spirit of mutual service.*³¹²

John Bradbury Robinson (1802-1869) had spent the first twenty-one years of his working life as a chemist. Based in Packer's Row, Chesterfield, he was well placed to appreciate the expanding demand for medical supplies. Derbyshire's practitioners, as one commentator has acknowledged, put the county at the cutting edge of the development of the medical

³¹² Derbyshire County Records Office [hereafter DCRO], D5395/7/4/2, Constitution and Rules, Robinsons' Works Sports and Social Club, p.1.

profession.³¹³ In 1839 Robinson 'exchanged his chemist's business of more than ten years' standing, for Fletcher's pill-box business of little worth'.³¹⁴ Over time, this bold decision proved justified. The business prospered and by the early years of the 1850s a distribution warehouse had been opened in London. Robinson also seized the business opportunities generated by the Crimean War (1854-56) which dramatically increased the demand for medical dressings. The need for lint dressings for sick and wounded British soldiers prompted Robinson to expand his business and to set up a new department at his Chesterfield factory; the box division was now joined by the dressings department.³¹⁵

Unlike Raleigh, which developed later and grew within the urban context of an already well-established industrial city, Robinson's grew to become a major employer in a large town at the centre of an expanding industrial area. Chesterfield was a fast growing community with around 5,000 people in 1850 rising to almost 70,000 by the mid twentieth century.³¹⁶ As a location for Robinson's business it offered significant advantages not least excellent transport links; 'Chesterfield was a good town to be near, and the Robinsons must have been affected by the hope and enterprise environing them'.³¹⁷ Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the rural landscape in and around Chesterfield was being eaten up by the expanding industrialisation of the region; in particular, heavy industries

³¹³ J. Woodward and D. Richards, *Towards a Social History of Medicine*, in J. Woodward and D. Richards (eds) *Health Care and Popular Medicine in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977), p.12.

³¹⁴ C. Porteous, *Pill Boxes and Bandages: a Documentary Biography of the First Two Generations of Robinsons of Chesterfield 1839-1916* (Chesterfield: Robinson and Sons Ltd, 1960), p. 32.

³¹⁵ www.derbyshirecountyrecords.co.uk, (accessed 12 January 2011).

³¹⁶ G. W. Martin, (ed), *More Memories of Chesterfield* (Halifax: True North Books Ltd, 2000), p.5.

³¹⁷ Porteous, *Pill Boxes and Bandages*, p.67.

such as the ironworks at Wingerworth, Sheepbridge and Stavely, and the collieries at Boythorpe, Bramton and Whittington.³¹⁸ Chesterfield itself was a significant centre for brewing with the success of its three breweries attributed to the quality of its water, drawn from deep wells beneath the town.³¹⁹ Set against this backdrop then Robinson & Sons grew to be one of a small group of large-scale employers in the area and, by 1939, as the company celebrated its centenary, over three and a half thousand people earned their living at the firm.³²⁰

The First World War brought greater prosperity to the company as, once again, the casualties of war led to increased demand for medical supplies. A short verse written by one of the female workforce and published in *The Link*, Robinson's in-house magazine, pointed to the firm's contribution to 'Our Girls' and their contribution to the war effort.

'The "Wheatbridge" girls are working,

They are working day and night,

They are making lint and bandage,

For the lads they sent to fight ...³²¹

³¹⁸ R. Cooper, *The Book of Chesterfield, A Portrait of The Town* (Chesham: Barracuda Books Ltd, 1977), p.105.

³¹⁹ M. E. Smith, *Industrial Derbyshire* (Derby: Breedon Books, 2008), pp.138-139.

³²⁰ *Robinsons of Chesterfield: Links to the Past, A Photographic history from the 1880s to the 1970s* (Chesterfield: Robinson and Sons Ltd, 2000), p.63.

³²¹ Chesterfield Central Library Cultural and Community Services, [hereafter CCL] 052.513691, *The Link*, Company Works Magazine for Robinson & Sons Ltd, June 1918, p.22.

By this time Robinsons occupied a substantial site extending ‘for a mile along the River Hipper’.³²² Expansion continued after 1918 and in 1920 a large portion of land was purchased near the Wheatbridge Works on which a new factory was built, this became the Portland Works. As business prospered in the inter-war years, Robinsons formed subsidiary companies to manufacture cotton wool in Australia and New Zealand.³²³ Further periods of growth in the 1940s and 1950s were stimulated by advances in both sanitary towels – the ‘Nikini’ brand remained a staple product of the company until the 1980s – and disposable nappies; in 1956, Robinsons beat off stiff competition to win a contract with Rowntrees for making the tubes for ‘Smarties’ sweets. The birth of the National Health Service in 1948 created sustained demand for medical products although the company suffered a blow in 1969 when the NHS ceased to use round boxes, manufactured at Robinsons, previously used to store pills and ointments. Nevertheless, by the 1970s the company was beginning to diversify into plastic products to meet changing technological and public demand.³²⁴ Over this period the firm became embedded in the local economy and the local community. Its owners became important figures in the town. No less than six members of the Robinson family had served as mayors of Chesterfield up to 1977.³²⁵

It is clear that over the period covered by this study, Robinson’s developed a reputation for ‘an enlightened attitude to company welfare’. As a history of the company notes: ‘Many companies have claimed to foster a “family” feeling within their business’, few

³²² *Porteous, Pill Boxes and Bandages*, p.177.

³²³ <http://www.derbyshirecountyrecords.co.uk>, (accessed 14 January 2011); also <http://www.robinsonpackaging.com/Group/history.html>, (accessed 19 November 2009).

³²⁴ <http://www.derbyshirecountyrecords.co.uk>, (accessed 14 January 2011).

³²⁵ Cooper, *The Book of Chesterfield*, p.104.

achieved this 'with so little fuss and so much genuine good will as the firm of Robinson & Sons'.³²⁶ Both sports and social activities were both much in evidence as part of Robinsons' industrial welfare strategy. 'Sport', it was noted in an early issue of *The Link*, 'is perhaps not a necessity, but to take an interest in sports certainly adds to the happiness of life and imparts a healthy tone to the mind. Most of our lives would be very flavourless by reason of the monotony of the work which brings "grist to the mill" were it not for healthy recreation'.³²⁷ Such language reflected a unifying thread of 'togetherness' which permeated many large scale workplaces throughout this period. This was also evident in the various works-related social activities which Robinsons helped to encourage or which they provided directly, not least the annual works outing. In 1939, the year that the company celebrated its centenary, when its workforce had grown to over 3,000, eight special trains carried Robinson workers and pensioners, along with wives and husbands, to London and back. They were met at St Pancras station by a fleet of eighty buses hired to show them the sights of the capital.³²⁸

As at Raleigh, works-based sport and social life was clearly very important at Robinsons with the company sustaining it through the provision of significant resources. This chapter aims to explore the considerable range of sporting and recreational activities at Robinsons. Why these activities were provided and the extent to which workers participated in them are important questions. In the first place the origins of clubs and activities will be addressed; next a broad sweep of sports and social activities will be examined in the context

³²⁶ <http://www.derbyshirerecords.co>, (accessed 19 November 2009); P. White, *From Pillboxes to Bandages ... and Back Again: The Robinson Story 1839-2000* (Chesterfield: Robinson & Sons, 2000), p. 185.

³²⁷ CCL, 052.51 3690, *The Link*, September 1919, p.28.

³²⁸ *Robinsons of Chesterfield*, p.3.

of wider developments and trends in leisure in Britain over the period 1918-70. This will be followed by an examination of Robinsons' general commitment to the idea of industrial welfare. Here the influence of the Industrial Welfare Society (IWS) from the early 1920s onwards in shaping the attitude of employers will be addressed. Penultimately, the role of the workers and the importance of social hierarchy in determining the nature and extent of works-based provision will be examined in order to enhance understanding of why some activities flourished while others failed. Finally, female recreation will be addressed. This section aims to evaluate the importance of workplace-based sports and recreational provision for women in the context of broader issues related to domesticity and femininity.

Origins of Leisure Activity

It seems likely that a formal link between work and leisure at Robinsons began to develop in the last quarter of the nineteenth century during the period which James Walvin has identified as being characterised by a 'national urge for leisure'.³²⁹ This period saw the emergence of sport in a recognisably modern form as local forms of football, for example, gave way to codified forms regulated by national governing bodies. As hours of work were reduced and workers gained more time for leisure there was also an explosion of non-sporting leisure activities. Robinsons, in its company literature, has always been keen to point to its long-standing commitment to company sports and social activities and there is some evidence that these broader developments touched the firm and its workers. In one of the early issues of *The Link*, published in 1920, was included photographic images relating to a number of early sporting ventures at Robinson & Sons. George Wildgoose, for example, is pictured in 1879 with ball in hand; he was labelled a 'Robinson footballing hero'. There is

³²⁹ J. Walvin, *Leisure and Society, 1830-1950*, (Harlow: Longman, 1978), p.66.

also reference to long-serving employee Robert Brailsford, who had started work for the company in 1874 at the age of seven, and the part played by Robinsons in the events arranged in Chesterfield to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887.³³⁰ Such events helped to embed the firm and its workforce in the local community and were 'warmly encouraged'. It was later claimed that *The Link* helped to establish a 'chain of good fellowship' at Robinsons which 'continued well beyond working hours'.³³¹

It was just after the First World War, however, that Robinsons appeared to adopt a more systematic approach to industrial welfare. In response to H.A.L. Fisher's Education Act of 1918 which allowed for school-leavers to continue their education during their first years at work, Robinsons established a 'preparatory school' which incorporated a fully-equipped gymnasium. When it opened, Miss Markham, the headmistress, offered a few words to the gathered dignitaries, observing that 'few things could be more important or valuable at a time like this than experiments of social and industrial character'. It was clear that Miss Markham saw herself as a progressive; she numbered herself among those who 'were great upholders of state action', while recognising 'that it was not usually the state that in the first place made experiments' and placing Robinsons in the vanguard of 'a movement which might spread throughout the country'.³³² It was a powerful endorsement of the company's commitment to industrial welfare. This was underlined when the Holme Brook Works Recreation Room was opened in 1920. Speaking at the opening ceremony Mr P. M. Robinson explained that '[it] was to be a place where the workers could hold gatherings of a

³³⁰ CCL, 052.51 L11591, *The Link*, December 1920, p. 9. See also *Robinsons of Chesterfield : Links to the Past. A Photographic history from the 1880s to the 1970s*.

³³¹ *Robinsons of Chesterfield*, p.63.

³³² CCL, 052.51 3691, *The Link*, December 1918, p. 24.

social nature, mix with each other, and foster the social spirit'. Under the charge of the Holme Brook Works Social Committee this facility could be used by workers from the other Robinson factories free of charge for events ranging from socials to dances, although a small charge was made for use of the piano.³³³ Provision of such facilities indicated both a company's desire to promote workplace-based recreation and, also, significantly, the company's success. In 1921, for example, Glasgow-based shipbuilders Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd were reported to be spending £24,000 on a recreation club for its workers.³³⁴ It seems clear that only sizeable and successful firms could afford this sort of outlay and in committing funds for this kind of purpose Robinsons was signalling that it was in the same league. In 1919 the *Journal of Industrial Welfare and Personnel Management* drew attention to Vickers Ltd whose works magazine was selling 7,000 copies per month, estimated over an eighteen month period in 1917-18, as an example of good practice.³³⁵ The establishment of a works magazine in 1918 was a firm indication of the direction in which Robinsons was moving.

Magazines like *The Link*, Brad Beaven has clearly identified, provided a 'point of contact'; they helped companies to promote a positive image of themselves to their workers while helping sports and social clubs to 'capture the readers' attention'.³³⁶ In June 1919, for

³³³ CCL, 052.51 11591, *The Link*, March 1920, p. 26.

³³⁴ Modern Records Centre, [hereafter MRC], University of Warwick, MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/3, *Journal of Industrial Welfare & Personnel Management*, January 1921, Vol. 3, No. 1, p.20.

³³⁵ MRC, Industrial Welfare Society Archive, MSS.303/B19/1/1, *Journal of Industrial Welfare and Personnel Management*, Vol. 1, No.3, January 1919, p.43.

³³⁶ B. Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp.142-143.

instance, *The Link* reported that it had been decided at a meeting held in April that a works football club should be formed with players drawn from 'employees of the firm only'.³³⁷ 'Outsiders' often played in works teams elsewhere at this time and it seems significant that Robinsons were anxious to ensure that the club which carried the company name should be truly representative of the firm and its workforce from the outset. The football club's designated officials included Major Victor Robinson MC (President), Major W.B. Robinson, Mr C.W. Robinson, Mr J.B. Robinson and Mr P.M. Robinson (Vice-Presidents), with committee members representing the firm's various works in and around Chesterfield.³³⁸ This suggests that the football club was probably a shop-floor initiative but clearly one that had the sympathetic support of the company, with *The Link* used to spread the good news of a development which showed employers and employees joining together in harmonious pursuit of industrial welfare.

A cricket club emerged in similar fashion. A notice published in the March 1920 issue of the *The Link* resulted in only half-a-dozen expressions of interest, leaving the organiser to lament 'without a better response ... during the next few weeks, the matter will have to drop'.³³⁹ However, three months later it was reported that the re-formation of the Cricket Club has served to revive many pleasant recollections'.³⁴⁰ This suggests that there had been a cricket club at Robinsons in the past though no details were provided. By 1922 signs were more encouraging and it was reported that 'greater interest in cricket seems to be evident this year', whilst one suggestion to raise interest was to arrange a cup competition between

³³⁷ CCL, 052.51 3690, *The Link*, June 1919, p.9.

³³⁸ CCL, 052.51 3690, *The Link*, June 1919, p.9.

³³⁹ CCL, 052.51 11591, *The Link*, March 1920, p.6.

³⁴⁰ CCL, 052.51 11591, *The Link*, June 1920, p.24.

the various works departments.³⁴¹ The extent to which these sporting activities were integrated into the industrial welfare strategy at Robinsons was underlined by the decision of the sports committee in 1920 to set up an insurance scheme to compensate against players unable to work owing to sporting injuries. The catalyst for this initiative was an injury to footballer Arthur Taylor incurred while playing for a works team.³⁴²

For all this activity though it was not until 1925 that an over-arching sports and social club was set up to accommodate all the factory sites that made up the firm Robinson & Sons Ltd. The club was to be called the Robinsons' Works Sports and Social Club (hereafter RWSSC), with a monthly subscription of 4d for men, 2d for boys under 16 and 2d for girls and women. The firm considered these to be affordable rates for some of the best facilities in the region. No subscription was to be collected in the event of illness or shortage of work whilst, interestingly, all pensioners on retirement became honorary members.³⁴³ This again has striking similarities with other manufacturing firms such as Raleigh. As we have already noted, retired workers at Raleigh were catered for by clubs, events and societies. The link between work and leisure helped to foster a bond that manufacturing firms perpetuated beyond their employees' working lives. Indeed there is a sense of from 'cradle to grave' in some firm's welfare provision. Sweets manufacturer Trebor, another Chesterfield-based firm, were not untypical when providing annual Christmas parties for their employees' children with sandwiches, cakes, jelly and trifle served by the Sports and Social Club Committee members. At the other end of the age spectrum a pensioners' outing for former employees of the evening shift proved to be a popular event, with a 'sing song and

³⁴¹ CCL, 052.51 3702, *The Link*, June 1922, p.23.

³⁴² CCL, 052.51 L11591, *The Link*, December 1920, p.20.

³⁴³ DCRO, D5395/7/4/2, Robinsons' Works Sports and Social Club (RWSSC), *Constitution and Rules Sheet*.

jollification' during their trip to Essex.³⁴⁴ No doubt this kind of provision enhanced the reputation of the company in the local communities from which their workforce was drawn.

By 1925, when the RWSSC was founded, Robinsons could point to a healthy number of works-based clubs and societies. Although no definitive list was published, references in the company literature reviewed for this study indicate a wide range of activity. It is important to note that this extensive range of formal provision would not have precluded workers at Robinsons organising their own activities on an informal *ad hoc* basis, whether meeting at a local pub or playing football in their lunch-break. Indeed, it may have encouraged them to do so. Sports catered for at Robinsons included football, cricket, hockey, bowls, rifle shooting, tennis, table tennis, gymnastics, swimming, darts, and billiards; on the social side there was an operatic society and a horticultural club, and, in addition, various works outings, dances, whist drives, cards and a host of 'socials' where employees could meet on a regular basis. The decision taken by the Robinson family in 1928 to purchase the Field House (Bradbury Hall) premises, which the firm had been renting since 1852, and to develop it as a site for works-based recreation was an indication of its positive commitment to this aspect of industrial welfare.³⁴⁵ Within a year the hall had been extended to create a canteen large enough to accommodate 800 diners and incorporating a stage with facilities for staging live theatre. There were also rooms which were made available to the various sports and social clubs.³⁴⁶ The RWSSC's Secretary's Report for 1929 reminded the workers who they should thank for this philanthropic gesture: 'by the

³⁴⁴ CCL, L338.2.CHE, *Working Together*, House Magazine of the Trebor Sharps Ltd Group of Companies, Spring 1969, pp.27, 45.

³⁴⁵ Porteous, *Pill Boxes and Bandages*, pp.74-5.

³⁴⁶ J. White, *From Pillboxes to Bandages ... and Back Again*, p.187.

kindness of our Directors we have had placed more or less at our disposal the use of one of the finest Halls in the country', a facility designed to enable 'social intercourse with our fellow workers'.³⁴⁷ In the late 1930s Bradbury Hall was extended further with the addition of York Hall to accommodate the increasing number of workers opting for a midday meal. A gymnasium, a billiards room and a room to be used for small meetings known as 'Everybody's Hall' were also added. Dances were a popular feature of the recreational activities on offer at Bradbury Hall. As one in-house company historian has observed, 'for every romance begun with a smile on the shop floor, there was another sealed with a kiss at the end of a Bradbury Hall two-step'.³⁴⁸

At Robinsons these developments in works-based sport and recreation took place alongside important changes in other areas of industrial welfare which had their beginnings during the First World War. At the Holme Brook works a Works Council was formed in 1917 and monthly council meetings designed to maintain 'personal contact between the workers and the Directors' began to make an impact. By the mid-1920s improvements in relation to holidays, hospital contributions and shift-work arrangements had been achieved, though a number of welfare problems remained including bad ventilation, lack of towels and the works surgery, which was 'locked up during overtime'.³⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning here that during the 1920s Industrial health and medicine was a topic close to the heart of the Industrial Welfare Society (IWS). In 1921 the IWS organised a conference of industrial medical officers which resulted in the publication of a pamphlet, *Medical Services in British Industry*, which soon became a widely-used work of reference. Though some employers

³⁴⁷ DCRO, D5395/7/4/1, *RWSSC Secretary's Report for 1929*.

³⁴⁸ White, *From Pillboxes to Bandages ... and Back Again*, p.187.

³⁴⁹ CCL, 052.51 3702, *The Link*, June 1922, p. 6.

remained sceptical many came to see the benefits of a healthy workforce and began to make a link between 'humanity and efficiency'.³⁵⁰ At Robinsons this led the management to make improvements relating to the health and safety of its employees while at work and to promote sport and other out-of-working-hours activities that might make workers happier, healthier and well-disposed towards the company.

In 1932 the *Derbyshire Times* observed that 'it would be difficult to exaggerate the unique contributions Messrs Robinson and Sons Ltd have made towards Chesterfield's development and growth'.³⁵¹ It was also important that Robinsons were concerned with their reputation in the town. Like Cadburys in Birmingham, they appreciated the benefits that fresh air and open spaces could bring to a community.³⁵² In 1927 the firm donated a large area of land running alongside the upper stretches of the River Hipper to the town for use as playing fields. The RWSSC was useful to the firm in this respect, notably in organising annual open sports days or 'Field Days', even though these sometimes ran at a loss. The club's committee grumbled in 1928 when a loss of £21 was recorded; its members 'failed to see that the club can afford such a luxury at present anyway'.³⁵³ This implied that Field Days had been run at a loss before and, as we shall see later, they would again, so the firm's continuing commitment to the event is significant. Such events were one way in which the Robinson family and Robinson & Sons Ltd displayed their civic engagement with the community in which they were located and from where they drew their workforce. Brad Beaven makes an important point when he has suggests that industrialists in the interwar

³⁵⁰ E. Sidney, *The Industrial Society 1918-1968*, (London: The Industrial Society, 1968), p.33.

³⁵¹ *Derbyshire Times*, 3 September 1932, p.13.

³⁵² See J. Bromhead, 'George Cadbury's Contribution to Sport', *The Sport Historian*, 20 (1), (2000), 99.

³⁵³ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, March 1929, p. 30.

years were becoming less involved with their local communities.³⁵⁴ This does not appear, however, to have been the case in Chesterfield, at least as far as the Robinsons were concerned; industrial welfare spilled over into civic engagement.



2:1: Mr. V. O. Robinson presenting prizes at the Chesterfield School Sports Day, 1930.

Source: *The Link*, September 1930, Chesterfield Central Library.

Sport at Robinsons, c.1918-45

James Cronin seems justified when he suggests that by 1920 the British worker had successfully brought about the establishment of a wide range of institutions that included, unions, local political parties, working men's clubs and a 'plethora of groups devoted to sports and hobbies', which he depicted as 'running through the neighbourhoods and

³⁵⁴ Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men*, p.141.

factories and centred upon the family, the pub or the place of work'.³⁵⁵ This meant, as John Stevenson has skilfully argued, that in the years immediately following the end of the war in 1918 there was simply, 'a resumption of many of the patterns of leisure evident before 1914'.³⁵⁶ That said, and as Jones has reiterated, the end of wartime hostilities ushered in a greater demand, on the part of organised Labour, for more leisure, usually manifested in demands for a shorter working week.³⁵⁷ This context helps to explain the demand for and supply of organised leisure provision for workers at Robinsons in the interwar period. The two sections that follow will survey the growth of sport and social activities at the firm from 1918 through to 1945.

At the forefront of workers' sport at Robinsons were team games such as football, cricket and hockey. Football was, in general, the most popular sport amongst working-class men and Matthew Taylor has argued that 'for most forms of recreational football, the inter-war years as a whole were a period of growth'.³⁵⁸ Developments at Robinsons appear to confirm this trend. In September 1919 *The Link* confidently suggested that 'judging by the enthusiasm of the players, we imagine some of their opponents will have cause to remember the "Robinson" Team before the season was over'. A list of forthcoming fixtures attached to the sports column indicated that other works teams, such as Tube Works and Stonegravels, were among Robinsons' scheduled opponents, though most matches were

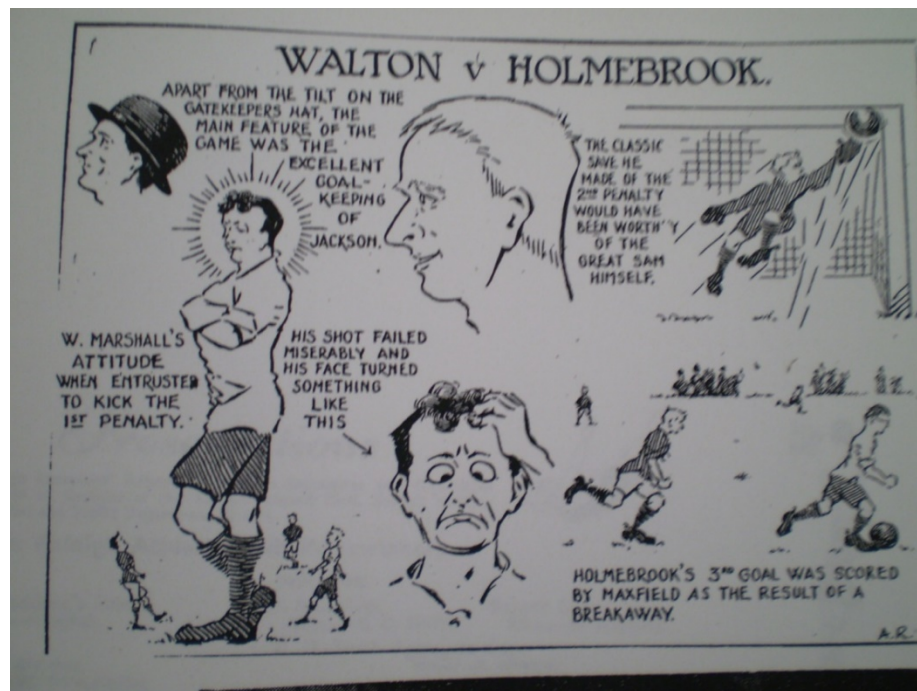
³⁵⁵ J. E. Cronin, *Labour and Society in Britain 1918-1979* (London: Batsford Academic, 1984), p.71.

³⁵⁶ J. Stevenson, *British Society 1914-45* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1984), p. 382.

³⁵⁷ S. G. Jones, *Workers at Play: A Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918-1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p.135.

³⁵⁸ M. Taylor, *The Association Game: A History of British Football* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), p.123.

against local club sides.³⁵⁹ Equally significant, as the illustration below indicates, football at Robinsons was sufficiently well supported to generate an inter-departmental competition.



2:2: Illustration depicting the Inter-Departmental Football Cup Final 1921.

Source: *The Link* June 1921, Chesterfield Central Library.

It is interesting to note that the Robinson works cricket club played at this time in a league consisting of local village and town teams; no recognisable works teams were evident.³⁶⁰ It is important to remember that works-based sport was located within a wider context of sports and leisure provision and it seems more than likely that some Robinson employees may have preferred to play their football and cricket for non-works teams. At this point, in

³⁵⁹ CCL, 052.51 3690, *The Link*, September 1919, pp. 28-29.

³⁶⁰ CCL, 052.51 3702, *The Link*, March 1922, p. 21

the early 1920s, it appears that Robinsons were fielding only one football team and one cricket team, both men's.

The principal team-sport activity available to women at Robinsons after the First World War was hockey. A women's hockey club had been formed in 1920 and two years later was reported to be 'meeting with marked success'; across the various Robinsons factory sites a number of girls had taken out membership and played in practice matches. The secretary of the club believed that hockey was becoming very popular throughout the country at this time and that it might soon be competing with football.³⁶¹ It may be that some women did turn to hockey as the Football Association began to actively discourage women's football in the early 1920s.³⁶² Richard Holt has convincingly argued that hockey in the late Victorian and Edwardian period was a game confined to the suburban wealthy which was compatible with middle-class ideas of social respectability.³⁶³ However, though the evidence from Robinsons suggests that its social base was widening to include more working-class women in the early 1920s, there were limits to what could be achieved. The main problem for Robinsons was a lack of teams to play against. Instead, it was hoped that each factory on site would have its own team in due course to facilitate in-house competition.³⁶⁴ What all this suggests is that company-based sports at Robinsons, for both men and women, were often characterised by modest rather than explosive growth as they emerged (or in some cases re-emerged) in the early 1920s. For example, despite the

³⁶¹ CCL, 052.51 L11591, *The Link*, December 1920, p. 20.

³⁶² See J. Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), pp.126-8.

³⁶³ R. Holt, *Sport and the British: a Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p.129.

³⁶⁴ CCL, 052.51 L11591, *The Link*, December 1920, p.20.

provision of facilities for tennis, initially it failed to attract the support from employees at Robinsons that was evident at some other local companies. The situation had improved by 1929, though more members were needed, especially men.³⁶⁵

In these circumstances cross-club co-operation was especially important in ensuring that individual clubs survived and prospered. Members of the hockey and cricket clubs joined forces in 1924 to arrange dances, whist drives and other social activities with the aim of raising funds to improve facilities and develop a General Sports Club.³⁶⁶ Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that some employees were active members of more than one club. For example, Jim Reddish, described as one of 'Our Celebrities', who was afforded a full-page spread in *The Link* in 1929, was a member of the football, cricket and billiards clubs as well as being an executive member of the Sports Club and Sports Day Committee. He was also a member of the Robinson & Sons Amateur Operatic Society.³⁶⁷ As the previous chapter on Raleigh indicated, some individuals clearly found the comradeship of work-based sports and recreation very attractive so that it became an integral part of their working and social lives. However, it should be noted that not all clubs were successful; some failed, despite the efforts of the enthusiasts who started them. The short-lived Rifle Club, for example, failed to get over the problem of having too few rifles. It was reported that 'two rifles were inadequate for the membership obtained'; waiting all night for 10 shots offered little enjoyment. This club may not have been alone in experiencing difficulties; the

³⁶⁵ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, September 1929, p.23; for comparison see CCL, L11209, *The Staveley Company's Magazine*, April 1927, p.181.

³⁶⁶ CCL, 052.51 3689, *The Link*, Christmas 1924, p.28.

³⁶⁷ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, December 1929, p.16.

RWSSC secretary's report for 1929 urged members to show 'a spirit of comradeship and loyal co-operation' to help breathe new life into some of the firms failing clubs.³⁶⁸

In contrast, the Swimming Club, which was open to both men and women, was a conspicuous success. Robinson Swimming Galas, held outdoors at Walton Dam, (a facility provided by the firm), were very popular in the 1920s attracting large crowds and underlining the potential of swimming as a flagship sport. There was even official Robinsons' swimwear, an indication of the link between sport and corporate identity which the firm was keen to foster.³⁶⁹ Substantial donations from the directors to the Sports Club - £300 in 1929 – effectively subsidised its activities.³⁷⁰ It seems clear that the board expected to derive some benefits from investing in and financially supporting sports activities but these were never clearly defined. Perhaps it would help in recruiting and retaining labour; perhaps it would simply help Robinsons' workers to keep fit. *The Journal of Industrial Welfare*, just a year after the General Strike of 1926, praised employers who showed 'a spirit of goodwill' by providing 'schemes from which the workers will benefit ... particularly in the matter of physical fitness'.³⁷¹

At Robinsons in the 1920s company-sponsored sport appears to have laid down solid, though relatively modest foundations. The development of the Bowls Club, founded in 1926, was perhaps typical, though the nature of the activity meant that it appealed largely to older employees. Some indication of the modest scale of the club was provided by its

³⁶⁸ DCRO, D5395/7/4/1, *RWSSC Secretary's Report 1929*.

³⁶⁹ *Robinsons of Chesterfield*, p.65.

³⁷⁰ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, March 1929, p.30.

³⁷¹ MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/9, *Journal of Industrial Welfare*, March 1927, p.101.

balance sheet for the period January to December 1929 which recorded income of £5 11s 5d and expenditure of £3 19s 0d.³⁷² However, even though this suggests a low profile there is evidence that the Bowling Club was increasingly valued by the company. Its facilities were used by the Chesterfield Bowls Association for a series of matches in 1929 and the club was complimented on the quality of its greens.³⁷³ Though bowling was more in evidence at other firms in the locality than at Robinsons - the Staveley Works, for example, could point to a very successful in-house league with eleven teams competing for the Humble Cup – support from below was sufficient to attract the sympathetic interest of management. In 1933 additional bowling greens were opened by Mr. P.M. Robinson and the club was participating in a local charity cup competition with fixtures arranged against Staveley, Elms and Matlock.³⁷⁴ This ensured that the Bowling Club, in its modest way, was helping to promote a positive image of Robinsons in and around Chesterfield.

What the early history of the Bowling Club suggests is that foundations were put in place in the 1920s that were subsequently built upon in the 1930s. Sports coverage in issues of *The Link* from the early 1930s suggests that sporting and recreational activities at Robinsons were starting to expand and that there were several new developments. Season 1932-33 was especially important for the football club at Robinsons. It was the club's first as a member of the Chesterfield and District League, entailing a programme of thirty matches along with local and county cup competitions. Such was the popularity of football

³⁷² CCL, 052.51 566, *Sports Club Balance Sheet 1929*, Robinson & Sons Ltd, pp.28-29.

³⁷³ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, September 1929, p.24.

³⁷⁴ CCL, 052.51 1051, *The Link*, June 1933, p.30; for bowling at Staveley see CCL, L11213, *The Staveley Company's Magazine*, November 1930, p. 26.

that a second team had been formed, although it played only 'friendlies'.³⁷⁵ By this time both the cricket and hockey clubs were running reserve teams whilst a series of cricket matches had been arranged for teams representing various sections of the Robinson workforce, for example, Portland Works and Holme Brook versus Staff, and Wheatbridge versus Walton. In the early 1930s, an upsurge was also evident in company-sponsored sports activities for women, especially cricket, netball and rounders. Netball, it was reported in 1932, had been successful in recruiting enthusiastic juniors. Meanwhile the women's cricket club, which will be discussed in greater detail further into this chapter, could look forward to a healthy programme of fixtures, with high-profile games against Boots, Players, Wolsey and the Nottingham Ladies Cricket Club.³⁷⁶

Issues surrounding competitive and non-competitive sport are worth dwelling on here. It would seem that league football was a short-lived experience for Robinsons Football Club. It is clear from a report in *The Link*, only three years after Robinsons had entered the local league in 1935, that they had withdrawn, a report indicating that 'Doubting Thomases', who had prophesied the end of the football club before Christmas owing to a decision to revert to friendly matches, had been proved wrong. The club, it seemed, was thriving, despite the efforts of league clubs to entice Robinsons' best players away from the works team. 'I thank these players for sticking together and helping to put Robinson's Works in favour of a Football Club again', the secretary noted.³⁷⁷ This seems to suggest that a more relaxed approach to company-sponsored sport prevailed at Robinsons than, for example, at Raleigh, where efforts were made to attract quality players to the firm

³⁷⁵ CCL, 052.51 827, *The Link*, September 1932, p.32.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ CCL, 052.57 930, *The Link*, March 1935, p.30.

in order to strengthen the company team and ensure success in league and cup competitions. Tony Mason, writing about the period before 1915, tentatively argues that football may have been used to 'attract some workers to join the firm in the first place'.³⁷⁸ It seems that at Robinsons they were happy to stay even if they were not competing in local leagues and that the company was quite happy with the club's decision to pull out of local competitions. There does not appear to have been any opposition to joining local leagues in principle. It was reported in March 1939 that the Golf section was considering joining a local Golf League.³⁷⁹ By the end of that year the men's Table Tennis Club had entered 'A' and 'B' teams in the Chesterfield League.³⁸⁰

Recreational sport continued at Robinsons throughout the Second World War based on the platform that had been established in the interwar years. Indeed the war seemed to provide a boost to some activities. Whereas, at the start of 1939, the Badminton Club had little to report except that the annual party had been a success and was appealing for more people to give the game a try, it could point at the end of the year to an increased membership, 'greater than in the previous seasons'.³⁸¹ This was in line with a pattern noted by the *Journal of Industrial Welfare* which observed in 1943 that workplace sport had continued (albeit at reduced levels) especially where large-scale companies had a range of activities already in place; it was in smaller firms or those without dedicated facilities that 'such activities have ceased during the war'.³⁸² Brad Beaven has argued with some

³⁷⁸ T. Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p.28.

³⁷⁹ CCL, 052.51 1712, *The Link*, March 1939, pp. 30-31.

³⁸⁰ CCL, 052.51 3700, *The Link*, December 1939, p. 38.

³⁸¹ CCL, 052.51 1712, *The Link*, March 1939, pp. 30-31; CCL 052.51 3700, *The Link*, December 1939, p.38.

³⁸² MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/25, *Journal of industrial Welfare*, July/August 1943, p.115.

authority that during the course of the war local and national authorities came increasingly to recognise the importance of recreational and sporting institutions, not least for the purposes of sustaining the morale of workers on the Home Front.³⁸³ At Robinsons there appears to have been a particular emphasis on providing activities for young employees. A Robinsons Works Boys football team was recruiting in 1942 and a weekly 'Games Evening' was started for under- eighteens with activities such as rounders, netball, Danish long ball and high jumping, though the lemonade and gramophone records on offer may have been equally important attractions.³⁸⁴ The revival of the firm's annual Sports and Gala Day in 1943 was clearly designed to have a more general appeal. Unsurprisingly, given the circumstances, a patriotic theme was much in evidence with a Physical Training display provided by paratroops and other contributions by the Girls Training Corps and the Sea Cadets. Those of an energetic disposition could take part in novelty races such as 'Beat the Blitz'. A boxing match proved popular; so too did the Horticultural Tent, bringing the sports and social sides of recreation at Robinsons together.³⁸⁵ The Sports and Gala Day offered an escape from the drudgery of wartime work while reaffirming Robinsons' commitment to industrial welfare more generally.

Social Activities c.1918-45

To a certain extent social activities at Robinsons ran hand-in-hand with sports. To illustrate, the football club held an annual dance when individual and team awards were presented,

³⁸³ Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men*, p.221.

³⁸⁴ CCL, 052.51 3697, *The Link*, September 1942, p.15; CCL, 052.51 3695, *The Link*, June 1943, p.15.

³⁸⁵ CCL, 052.51 3695, *The Link*, September 1943, p. 8.

whilst a social drink along with a game of billiards was commonplace at Bradbury Hall. There were, however, many leisure pursuits that were unconnected with sport. Three such activities stand out amongst the various activities, clubs and societies reported in *The Link*: staff/works outings, dances and the Operatic Society. Therefore, the bulk of this section will be taken up with these examples; other social activities will be mentioned briefly here but will be given greater exposure in the section of this chapter that covers the period 1945-1970.

On the 2 January 1919 the restrictions on pleasure trips imposed during the First World War were lifted.³⁸⁶ In his novel, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, Robert Tressell revealed how the works trip could relieve ‘the cheerless monotony’ of working lives, for many it was ‘the event of the year’.³⁸⁷ At Robinsons, as at Raleigh, outings of various kinds were an important component of company welfare provision in the interwar years. There was much emphasis at the end of the war and in the immediate post-war period on ‘co-partnership’ between capital and labour.³⁸⁸ The first staff outing from Robinsons after the war, organised by the firm’s Staff Workers Council, reflected this spirit. The party of 56 included Mr. C. W. Robinson, Mr. and Mrs. P. M. Robinson and Mrs. J. B. Robinson who were conveyed by charabanc, via the Snake Pass and Glossop, to Manchester “where dinner [was] the first consideration’.³⁸⁹ This venture, however, was soon overshadowed by the

³⁸⁶ A. Delgado, *The Annual Outing and Other Excursions* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1977), p. 140.

³⁸⁷ R. Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, (London: Granada, 1965), pp.430-431; first published in 1955.

³⁸⁸ See S. Newton and D. Porter, *Modernization Frustrated: the Politics of Industrial Decline in Britain since 1900* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp.54-5.

³⁸⁹ CCL, 052.51 3690, *The Link*, September 1919, p .7.

revival of the pre-war tradition of the annual works outing, the whole operation organised by a designated committee, who arranged for the Great Central Railway to provide a special train to carry over 800 Robinsons employees to Cleethorpes and back for a day by the sea. Some 755 return tickets had been purchased at 18 shillings and a further 93 at 9 shillings; when other expenses were added, the total cost to the firm was £1037-16s-8d.³⁹⁰ The revival of the works outing at Robinsons has to be seen in the wider context of the firm's paternalistic commitment to industrial welfare which soon embraced the establishment of a Benevolent Fund 'to assist our employees when off work through ill health', partly funded by modest employee contributions.³⁹¹ As Fitzgerald underlines, the administration and funding of sick pay was another way in which employer-employee co-operation was pursued at this time.³⁹²

At Robinsons all aspects of the relationship between the firm's owners and its employees were characterised by an element of paternalism. In the interwar period this was embodied in Miss Florence Robinson, a key figure in the welfare department from 1918, and founder of the Robinson Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society (RAODS). From 1922, according to one company historian, this activity flourished at the firm; it 'united people from all areas of the company under the capable direction of its founder, Florence Robinson'.³⁹³ Martin Pugh, pointing to the popularity of radio broadcasts by Dame Nellie Melba, has argued that the gap between 'high' and 'popular' culture in the interwar period

³⁹⁰ CCL, 052.51 L11591, *The Link*, September 1920, pp.7-10.

³⁹¹ CCL, 052.51 3702, *The Link*, March 1922, p. 20.

³⁹² R. Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management and Industrial Welfare, 1846-1939* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), p.14.

³⁹³ White, *From Pillboxes to Bandages*, p.187.

has been exaggerated.³⁹⁴ Light opera, especially Gilbert and Sullivan, made a modest contribution to this process and was very much in evidence at Robinsons. Writing in 1926 ‘as one who has always taken the greatest interest in the social side of the works’, Florence Robinson observed not only that the Operatic Society has gone from strength to strength in its first four years but that it had also succeeded in binding together the firm’s owners and their employees into one unifying club.³⁹⁵



2:3: Operatic Society production of ‘Florodora’, 1932.

Source: *The Link* September 1932, Chesterfield Central Library.

³⁹⁴ See M. Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between The Wars*, (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 326.

³⁹⁵ DCRO, D5395/7/6/6, Robinson & Sons Ltd Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society [henceforth RAODS], Programme for 1969 production ‘Carousel’.

The society's first production was 'The Enchanted Glen' in 1926 this was performed by an all-female cast in the school room of a local Congregational Chapel.³⁹⁶ By the following year the Operatic & Dramatic Society, as it was now called, saw its production of 'Aladdin and Out' performed over four nights in March. The society's minute book reveals that fifty posters had been printed and distributed around the works and local area, whilst a request for a £10 grant had been made to the Sports Club to help fund the production.³⁹⁷ Further shows included 'The Pirates of Penzance' (1928), which was the first time that men were allowed into the cast, 'Florodora' (1932) 'Sunny' (1936) and 'Highlights of 1940' (1940) which was the final show until the end of World War Two.³⁹⁸ Significantly, some of the issues normally connected with sports teams surfaced in connection with RAODS. From the society's inception up until the outbreak of war 'everyone connected with the production was employed at the firm'.³⁹⁹ Whether this stance had any implications for staff recruitment and retention is an open question. The prospect of joining a society which was well regarded in local amateur operatic and dramatic circles may have encouraged some individuals to seek employment at Robinsons; more likely, however, it may have encouraged those already active in the society to stay with the company.

From the late 1920s weekly dances were being held at Bradbury Hall, indeed the Operatic Society had organised one such dance in 1931 in order to raise funds for their next production.⁴⁰⁰ It would be difficult to overstate the popularity of dances in interwar Britain.

³⁹⁶ DCRO, D5395/7/6/7, RAODS, Special 50th edition programme review 1926-1976.

³⁹⁷ DCRO, D5395/7/6/1, RAODS, Minute Book 1927-1951, June 1927.

³⁹⁸ DCRO, D5395/7/6/6, RAODS, Programme for 'Carousel' July 1976.

³⁹⁹ DCRO, D5395/7/6/7, RAODS, Special 50th edition review.

⁴⁰⁰ DCRO, D5395/7/6/1, RAODS, Minute Book 1927-1951, June 1931.

Apart from the attractions of the music and the various dance crazes, dances provided 'much the best opportunity for meeting members of the opposite sex'. At Robinsons, a Dance Committee was formed in 1929 with the object of affording opportunities to learn to dance as well organising competitions and 'Special Carnival Nights'. The Entertainment Section secretary's report for 1933 noted that dances had been very well supported and that as a result the section had taken on a 'new lease of life'.⁴⁰¹ Only two years later, however, the Entertainment Section minutes revealed a worrying trend; some activities had been curtailed 'in view of increased competition ... it is obvious we cannot compete with the professional Dance Halls'.⁴⁰² It is always important to set workplace-based recreation in the context of the wider leisure activities market. There was, Pugh has observed, 'an apparently insatiable demand for dances' but it was increasingly met by 'entrepreneurs who built chains of dance halls across Britain'. In addition, church and village halls often staged regular dances which may have offered a significant attraction; in a provincial town, like Chesterfield, 'anything up to a dozen would take place on Saturday nights'.⁴⁰³ Moreover, as Juliet Gardiner has emphasised, by the mid-1930s it was possible to roll up the carpet and dance at home with the aid of a gramophone and/or the BBC which broadcast dance band music from the West End for an hour-and-a-half every evening except Sunday.⁴⁰⁴

Dancing, however, was an activity that could be integrated into the activities of many of the sports and social clubs at Robinsons and was most certainly on offer during the works outing to Scarborough in 1929 when 760 employees as well as 128 'outsiders'

⁴⁰¹ DCRO, D5395/7/4/1, RAODS Secretary's Report 1933.

⁴⁰² DCRO, D5395/7/4/2, RWSSC, Minute Book for Sports and Social Club 1935-1951, July 1935.

⁴⁰³ Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, p. 220.

⁴⁰⁴ See J. Gardiner, *The Thirties: An Intimate History* (London: Harper Press, 2010), pp. 625-6.

boarded the train and, as the balance sheet revealed, some £501 was paid to the L.M.S. Railway Company.⁴⁰⁵ As at Raleigh, the annual works outing was an event of immense symbolic significance at Robinsons in the interwar period and this was especially evident in 1939 when the firm celebrated its centenary with a works trip and celebration far more ambitious than any that had gone before. On the 14 July 1939 eight trainloads of Robinson workers and pensioners, comprising, along with families and friends, a total of around 3,700 people, descended on London.⁴⁰⁶ This 'Trip of a Lifetime' was a lavish occasion requiring a significant input of resources and most elaborate organisation.

All expenses were covered by the firm reportedly at a cost of over £7,000. We should not underestimate the scale of this commitment; it amounts to almost £387,000 at current (2014) prices. First class rail tickets, morning newspapers and a breakfast greeted all those travellers on the first train departing at 4.22am.⁴⁰⁷ In London four Lyons Corner House Cafes had been booked to provide lunch on a shift basis at a cost of over £800.⁴⁰⁸ Workers used their free time to see the sights including the zoo, Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London. To crown the day the Royal Albert Hall had been booked for a Grand Finale headlined as an 'International All-Star Variety Performance', with comedian Tommy Trinder, then at the height of his popularity, at the top of the bill. To start proceedings the directors of the company addressed the audience thanking them for their hard work and loyalty as well as reading messages of congratulations, mainly from customers and

⁴⁰⁵ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, September 1929, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁶ *Robinsons of Chesterfield*, pp. 17-24.

⁴⁰⁷ *More Memories of Chesterfield*, p.66.

⁴⁰⁸ *Robinson & Sons Ltd: Chesterfield, 1839-1989*, (Chesterfield: Chesterfield and District Local History Society, 1989), p.24.

suppliers, but including a message from King George VI himself.⁴⁰⁹ The grand scale of this particular works outing no doubt impressed Robinsons' employees; it was also a promotional exercise designed to impress those with whom Robinsons did business. Using the centenary as a pretext, the directors used the event as a show of strength as well as a celebration of Robinsons' paternalistic style. Thus there were multiple meanings to this 'Special Day'.

The war began six weeks later and social activities at the firm were curtailed though, as we have already noted in relation to sport, some activities continued. For example, in 1943 *The Link* reported that the Health Department was organising 'Holiday Hikes' in the local countryside for workers during their holidays.⁴¹⁰ Other events, such as dances and teas to raise funds for the war effort, were also a feature at Robinsons. It was not until late 1945, however, that works-based recreational activities were to begin their return to pre-war levels. Given this state of affairs the period 1945-1970 will be examined next, starting with a look at the continuities and changes in the sports provision on offer at the firm.

Sports and Social Activities at Robinsons, 1945-c.1970

The post war period leading up to 1970 was to witness a radical change in the social and economic condition of the British worker. Working hours were slowly decreasing; Halsey has convincingly demonstrated that between 1945 and 1970 manual workers saw the average time spent at work drop from around 47.5 to 40.3 hours per week.⁴¹¹ Holt and

⁴⁰⁹ *Robinsons of Chesterfield*, p.22.

⁴¹⁰ CCL, 052.51 3695, *The Link*, June 1943, p.15.

⁴¹¹ R. Price and G. S. Bain, 'The Labour Force', in A. H. Halsey (ed), *British Social Trends since 1900: A Guide to the Changing Social Structure of Britain*, (London: Macmillian, 1988), p. 178.

Mason have clearly indicated that the post-1945 period, with its raft of welfare reforms such as in health, education and housing were 'accompanied by benefits to sport'.⁴¹² However, rising levels of affluence, along with the increased personal mobility that came with car ownership, meant that workers had access to a wider range of leisure opportunities by the 1960s. All these factors have to be taken into account as we turn to the sporting activities available to employees at Robinson & Sons over the period to 1970.

In the immediate post-war years football remained one of the most popular and well-supported sections. Not only were Robinsons fielding more teams than before the war – by 1948/49 season there were two men's team and two youth teams - they had also overcome their reluctance to join in local leagues. A visit in November 1948 by Ray Middleton, a player with the local professional club, who showed a coaching film and passed on tips, was attended by fifty members, an indication of the football section's strength at this time. Cricket, the other major team sport for men at Robinsons, showed a similar pattern of development. The Robinson Works team were playing in the Second Division of the Derbyshire Cricket League and a youth team had been established. An annual match was played against Smith & Nephew of Hull, the makers of Elastoplast and matches were arranged between the various departments at the Robinson factories thereby making cricket available to a greater proportion of the workforce.⁴¹³

Though appealing to a different age group, the Bowling Club was also thriving in the mid 1940s and there was a similar emphasis on competition with an annual handicap competition and teams entering the Saturday League, the Wednesday League, the Hospital

⁴¹² R. Holt and T. Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.21.

⁴¹³ CCL, 052.51 3485, *The Link*, December 1948, p.14.

Cup and the County Cup. In this respect, and no doubt many others, sporting activities at Robinsons mirrored those at other industrial firms in the neighbourhood, such as Staveley Works. There were around 35 members of the Bowling Club at Robinsons in 1946, although this does not account for casual players who did not compete in the various competitions.⁴¹⁴ Photographs in the June 1955 issue of *The Link* were suggestive of the reasons why the Robinsons board valued sport. Paternalistic pride in their employees' achievements was clear; the youth football team are pictured - front row with arms folded, back row with arms behind their backs - with a trophy that they had recently won. Sport could also be seen as a cohesive force, unifying the Robinson workforce. After Wheat Bridge Mills had beaten Walton Works in the final of the Robinsons works hockey tournament, the teams came together for a photograph. The camera captured an image of laughter and smiling faces, very much one that the company was keen to promote and useful for both internal and external consumption.⁴¹⁵ (see figure 2:4 below).



⁴¹⁴ DCRO, D5395/7/5/1, RWSSC, Bowling Club, Minutes 1946; for bowling at Staveley see CCL, B38.2 A678, *The Staveley News*, Autumn 1952, p.87.

⁴¹⁵ CCL, 052.51 6359, *The Link*, June 1955, pp. 1, 37.

2:4: Inter-Works hockey finalists 1955.

Source: *The Link* June 1955, Chesterfield Central Library.

For all this continued activity there seemed little change in the range of sports on offer between 1945 and 1960. To a large extent this reflected what was happening in the broader market for sports as pre-war preferences initially re-established themselves. By the 1960s, however, growing affluence was beginning to generate some significant shifts in how workers wanted to spend their leisure time. Car ownership in Britain expanded rapidly between the 1950s and the 1970s; by 1970 around 52 per cent of the population owned one car and 11 per cent owned at least two.⁴¹⁶ In these conditions it is not surprising that a Motor Club was formed at Robinsons in 1961. Five years later it was reported that 'far from interest waning, as is often the case with clubs and societies these days, it is on the increase'.⁴¹⁷ Apart from activities such as map-reading, club outings proved very popular with members with a regular 'run' to the 'Travellers Rest' at Barlow where films were shown. All this information supplied by the aptly named club secretary 'Mini' Gordon.⁴¹⁸

There were other ways in which developments at Robinsons reflected changing use of leisure in the 1960s. Although the British Judo Association had been formed in 1948, it

⁴¹⁶ A. Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp.32-3, 238.

⁴¹⁷ CCL, 052.51 8957, *The Link*, March 1966, p.10.

⁴¹⁸ CCL, 052.51 L9587, *The Link*, September 1968, p. 39.

was the televising of judo from the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 that gave the sport its biggest boost in Britain. At Robinsons, judo proved especially popular with ‘juniors’ who were able to incorporate a display at Bradbury Hall in 1968 into their Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme programme. A trip to the national championships at Crystal Palace was also arranged.⁴¹⁹ The craze for ten-pin bowling – more than a thousand US style indoor alleys were opened in the UK in the 1960s – also impacted on workers at Robinsons.⁴²⁰ The firm had its own bowling league with teams such as ‘The Rebels’ and ‘The Scrubbers’, and was almost certainly started in 1966 as a result of a ‘bottom up’ initiative, though Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Robinson presented the prizes at the end-of-season awards ceremony.⁴²¹ One of the great attractions of ten-pin bowling was that it offered a sociable ‘night out’ and this rather than the sporting competition, may have been an important factor in the club’s success. It is, perhaps, worth reflecting on the fact that ten-pin bowling necessarily involved the use of facilities away from the firm’s premises. Griffiths makes the important observation that from the 1940s onwards workers were choosing to spend more of their leisure time away from the workplace so this was not an entirely new feature of company sport.⁴²² However, it does signal the extent to which the landscape of sport and leisure had changed by the 1960s forcing companies to make use of rather than compete with the commercialised leisure sector.

⁴¹⁹ See <http://www.britishjudo.org.uk> (accessed 24 March 2011); CCL, 052.51 L9587, *The Link*, Christmas 1968, p.49.

⁴²⁰ Holt and Mason, *Sport in Britain*, p. 6.

⁴²¹ CCL, 052.51 8957, *The Link*, September 1966, p.7.

⁴²² J. Griffiths, ‘Give my regards to Uncle Billy ...’: the Rites and Rituals of Company Life at Lever Brothers, c.1900 – c.1990’, *Business History*, 37,(4), (1995), 38.

James Walvin's influential study has stated that, 'all forms of social enjoyment soared in the post-war years'.⁴²³ As with sport, much of the social provision at Robinsons after 1945 - dinner dances, works outings and the Operatic Society – represented continuity with the pre-war past, though some new developments - Talent Competitions, Holiday Camps and Photographic Clubs, for example – were to emerge later, reflecting changing demands and tastes. This is not to suggest that such activity was altogether absent in the pre-war period, but there is a clear escalation of such provision in the twenty-five years after the war. In the first instance, therefore, we will focus on these newer, largely post-war developments.

In March 1948 the *Sheffield Telegraph* printed a special feature headed 'Boy of 15 is Star Comedian'. Its subject was Tommy Pollendine, an apprentice mechanic at Robinson & Sons Ltd. Tommy had revealed his skill for imitation (notably Winston Churchill) in the works talent competition and, as the article reported, was a 'natural comedian who loves the stage'; moreover his talent didn't end there as he went on to sing as a part of his 'turn'. On the back of this performance Tommy was offered a leading role in the Operatic Society's next production, making him the youngest of the 50 cast members drawn from the various works departments.⁴²⁴ It cannot be said with any certainty that talent shows at the firm were a regular feature of workers' entertainment at Robinsons but talent contests were a feature of radio programming at this time – Hughie Greene's 'Opportunity Knocks' made its first appearance on BBC radio in 1947 – and it seems likely that developments at Robinsons

⁴²³ Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, p. 150.

⁴²⁴ DCRO, D5395/7/6/7, *Sheffield Telegraph*, 5 March 1948.

were simply following an established popular trend, as they later did with sports such as judo and ten-pin bowling.

Given his particular talents it is not surprising that Tommy Pollendine was involved in another of Robinsons' social enterprises, the firm's Holiday Camp in Abergele, North Wales. This camp was predominantly for young workers at the firm, a place where they could escape the rigours of work and forge stronger social links with colleagues from other departments. However, references in *The Link* to 'our camp commandant ... [who] arrived in camp on Thursday along with Mr. Fred Astwood and Clarrie Ward', suggest that there was a strong element of supervision, especially as these "three old soldiers" were reported to have 'carried out their duties faithfully'.⁴²⁵ Arguably, the regimentation of factory work was simply transferred to the holiday camp environment. In this respect Robinsons were again simply following an established trend as holiday camps, offering a communal and relatively well-ordered form of recreation for the masses, became a firmly-established feature of the leisure market in the immediate post-war years. Barton's original research has identified that whilst boarding houses remained the most popular form of accommodation in the late 1940s, holiday camps were growing in number and capacity.⁴²⁶ Kynaston, meanwhile, refers to 'holiday camp phenomenon' of this period, driven largely by Butlins, Pontins and Warners.⁴²⁷ Robinsons was seeking to provide something a little different here, to provide a holiday experience underpinned by company paternalism. Though, perhaps, maternalism might be more appropriate in this instance as Florence Robinson was very much to the fore.

⁴²⁵ CCL, 052.51 3485, *The Link*, September 1948, pp. 14-15.

⁴²⁶ S. Barton, *Working-Class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 219-220.

⁴²⁷ D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), pp.217-19.

‘She was at the centre of every development ... of welfare facilities’, as one company historian has noted. Photographs from the camp in the 1940s and 1950s reveal a motherly-looking Florence Robinson surrounded by scores of youthful smiling faces as they posed for the group photograph.⁴²⁸



2:5: Florence Robinson (dark clothing) at the firms holiday camp Abergele: 1940s.

Source: *Robinsons of Chesterfield: Links to the Past*, p.67.

It seems that the combination of holidays, trips and photography was an enticing combination. Walvin has observed, as early as the Edwardian period the commercial aspect of photography at seaside resorts ran ‘hand in hand’ with the growth of leisure.⁴²⁹ By the 1950s, Marwick underlines, ‘cameras were to art and advertising what washing machines were to domestic life’; more importantly, ‘they fitted well into the international ... and fairly

⁴²⁸ *Robinsons of Chesterfield*, p.67.

⁴²⁹ J. Walvin, *Beside the Seaside: A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1978), p. 102.

classless world of gadgetry'.⁴³⁰ At Robinsons the Photographic Club capitalised on the availability of relatively cheap photographic equipment and the growing interest in photography. The seaside proved a fruitful location for its members. The club's annual competition in 1955 generated numerous images of shore lines and children playing in the sea; first prize went to Mr Lee of the Holme Brook Works for his picture of Scarborough Harbour.⁴³¹ Five years later the section notes reported a near record entry of 120 black and white prints and eighty colour as members vied for the S. C. Wallhead Cup and the David Robinson Cup.⁴³²

In the 1960s the society organised trips to sites where members could practice their skills, such as Hull Docks, Heathrow Airport and Whitby Abbey. In this respect the Photographic Society at Robinsons operated in a similar way to that at Raleigh. Arguably, both societies served a dual purpose in bringing workers with a common interest together whilst also offering a temporary escape from the routines of factory life. From an industrial welfare perspective, moreover, the company, through the society and its activities, was promoting a form of rational recreation pursued by healthy, informed and technically-accomplished employees. It thus exemplifies Robinsons' commitment to a model of industrial welfare that was inextricably linked to the sphere of sport and recreation.

Company Paternalism and Industrial Welfare at Robinsons

⁴³⁰ Marwick, *British Society*, p.131.

⁴³¹ CCL, 052.51 6359, *The Link*, December 1955, p. 22.

⁴³² CCL, 052.51 7314, *The Link*, March 1960, p. 33.

‘Why recreation in the industrial sector? Why care for the employee?’⁴³³ These linked questions, posed by John Schleppi, have generated a variety of answers from historians. For Claydon, setting up sports and social clubs was one of the ways in which firms in the motor industry ‘tried to foster contentment and identification with the company’.⁴³⁴ Helen Jones further illustrates the point by arguing that from the early 1920s this kind of commitment to industrial welfare was most evident in ‘large, well-organised and successful firms’, of which Raleigh would be a good example.⁴³⁵ Stephen Jones used the term ‘company paternalism’ in connection with strategies designed to mould a deferential workforce but within the specific context of the Lancashire cotton industry in the 1920s where management practices shaped in the nineteenth century had survived.⁴³⁶ In contrast Fitzgerald places little emphasis on the role of family firms and individual owner-employers, instead locating the evolution of industrial welfare in the twentieth century in the context of the demise of ‘owner paternalism’.⁴³⁷ The case of Robinson & Sons suggests that there is room for argument here; owner paternalism could still have an important part to play in the twentieth century.

⁴³³ J. R. Schleppi, ‘“It Pays”: John H. Patterson and Industrial Recreation at the National Cash Register Company’, *Journal of Sport History*, 6, (3), 1979, 26.

⁴³⁴ T. Claydon, ‘Trade Unions, Employers and Industrial Relations in the British Motor Industry c.1919-45’, *Business History*, 29 (3), (1987), 310.

⁴³⁵ H. Jones, ‘Employer’s Welfare Schemes and Industrial Relations in Inter-War Britain’, *Business History*, 25, (1), (1983), 62.

⁴³⁶ S. G. Jones, ‘The Survival of Industrial Paternalism in the Cotton Districts: A View From the 1920s’, *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 7, (1987), 1.

⁴³⁷ R. Fitzgerald, ‘Employment Relations and Industrial Welfare in Britain: Business Ethics versus Labour Markets’, *Business and Economic History*, 28, (2), (1999), 167.

It is important to emphasise that sports and social provision at Robinsons was part of an overall industrial welfare strategy to which the family that owned the firm were committed and with which they were identified. When the Preparatory School was opened in 1918, the paternalistic influence of the Robinson family was evident in the presence of several of the firm's directors at the opening ceremony. Those attending would benefit from 'a good foundation for the technical training which will follow when the scholar has been transferred into the factory'.⁴³⁸ What this suggests is that scholars were being brought into a relationship with Robinsons from which both they and the company would benefit in the long term. Like the Cadburys at Bournville, though on a more modest scale, the paternalistic strategy pursued by the Robinson family extended to housing – a major concern in the immediate post-war years. Robinsons' employees needed places to live and, preferably close to their place of work. In 1919 the Wheat Bridge House Building Association was formed with a view to building 112 new homes; the first sod was cut by Mrs William Bradbury Robinson in March 1920 and employees of the firm were encouraged to become shareholders.⁴³⁹ If the object was to encourage 'self-help' as well as deference and loyalty there is evidence that the strategy was successful. Workers at Robinsons had formed a Self Help Club as early as 1915 to help save for holidays and Christmas.⁴⁴⁰ The Robinsons' Works Coal Club in 1922 was a similar development. Meetings in the various works departments led to the formation of a committee to organise the bulk purchase of coal which could then be sold to members at a very competitive price, effectively a discount of

⁴³⁸ CCL, 052.51 3691, *The Link*, December 1918, p.22.

⁴³⁹ *Robinson & Sons Ltd : Chesterfield 1839-1989*, p.16.

⁴⁴⁰ CCL, 052.51 3691, *The Link*, June 1918, p. 27.

about 10 per cent, thus easing pressure on household budgets.⁴⁴¹ Apart from indicating that Robinsons' workers had a degree of autonomy and clearly were capable of 'bottom up' initiatives, it suggests a pragmatic attitude which would have encouraged them to respond positively to all aspects of their employer's industrial welfare strategy whether it was the range of recreational activities on offer or the buses ('works specials') lined up on Goyt Side at the end of the working day as the mass exodus of the Robinsons day shift emerged.⁴⁴²

It helped, no doubt, that the Robinson family – not least Florence Robinson - were so visibly engaged with the welfare of their workers. Few opportunities were missed to demonstrate that the company was a family-run business and that workers, at least symbolically, were regarded as part of the family. Thus, on the occasion of Mr C. P. Robinson's wedding in 1927, a tea and a concert was provided by the firm to ensure that the entire Robinson 'family' could celebrate.⁴⁴³ The personal touch was applied strategically as at the first annual dinner of the 'Litho Chapel' in 1955 when those present included Mr. P. M. Robinson, Mr. E. B. Robinson and Mr. A. B. Robinson. As the guests sat down to dinner they were welcomed by Mr. Bishop, 'Father of the Chapel'; and a round of community singing after dinner 'helped to make a very enjoyable evening'.⁴⁴⁴ In more ways than one this demonstrated the harmonious nature of employer-employee relationships at Robinsons.

⁴⁴¹ CCL, 052.51 3702, *The Link*, December 1922, p. 9.

⁴⁴² *Robinson & Sons Ltd: Chesterfield, 1839-1989*, p.39.

⁴⁴³ CCL, *Derbyshire Times*, 12 December 1927, p .5.

⁴⁴⁴ CCL, 052.51 6359, *The Link*, March 1955, p .11.

In 1932, while noting that conditions were difficult and that 'we in common with other organisations of a similar nature, have perforce felt the pinch', the RWSSC's annual report dutifully recorded that 'once again we are indebted to our directors for generously supplying us with the necessary funds'.⁴⁴⁵ No doubt some of the beneficiaries of the firm's largesse in the 1930s were present at the pensioners Christmas Dinner in 1967 when several members of the Robinson family were on hand in order to 'pass a few kindly words' and Mr. H. Widdowson, representing their guests, thanked the Directors 'for their generosity and kindness'.⁴⁴⁶ Paternalism, which meant ensuring that workers acknowledged that the company was a source of benevolence, was maintained consistently over the long run. In 1939, speaking on behalf of the visitors at the annual cricket match between Robinsons and Smith and Nephew, Mr. H. N. Smith complimented Robinson & Sons Ltd on 'the manner in which the welfare of its employees was considered'.⁴⁴⁷ This was duly reported in *The Link* which frequently reminded its readers that they were working for a firm with a reputation for treating its workers well. Griffiths, commenting on company magazines at Lever Brothers, made the key point that 'nearly every article reinforced the image of a paternalistic culture'.⁴⁴⁸ Much the same could be said of *The Link* at Robinsons.

Whilst the shape and content of the works-based sport and social activities on offer at Robinsons changed over the period 1918-1970, there was an underlying consistency in the firm's general commitment to a broad industrial welfare strategy and a determination to ensure that employees were made aware of the company and its owners as benefactors and

⁴⁴⁵ DCRO, D5395/7/4/1, RWSSC, Annual Report for 1932.

⁴⁴⁶ CCL, 052.51 L9587, *The Link*, March 1968, p .12.

⁴⁴⁷ CCL, 052.51 3700, *The Link*, September 1939, p .35.

⁴⁴⁸ Griffiths, 'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy', p .36.

providers. At times, as with the Self Help Club, workers were able to take the initiative themselves but within the paternalistic framework provided by the company. The case of Jim Reddish supplies an indication of how this strategy could work. As we have already seen, Jim was a member of a numerous works-based clubs and societies at Robinsons during the interwar period. During the 1928-9 football season, however, he had been advised by various people to 'seek higher class football ... for his decided talents'. *The Link* reported that Jim was grateful for their advice but he 'prefers to stand by his own works team'.⁴⁴⁹ This was, of course, the kind of story that *The Link* liked to print; it provided an example of how a model employee should behave, in terms of loyalty to his team-mates, his work colleagues and to the firm which paid him and effectively sponsored his football and other recreational activities. Even if such activities were not especially critical in terms of recruitment the example of Jim Reddish suggests that they played a part in giving workers reasons to stay at a particular firm. We have already seen how certain individuals at Raleigh showed the same strong affinity for works-based clubs and so it would be unwise to dismiss the publicity afforded to this case as merely company propaganda.

Class and Occupational Hierarchy

In order to gain a better understanding of the way in which the containing framework of company paternalism operated at Robinsons it is useful to examine it firstly in relation to class and, secondly, in relation to gender. David Cannadine's authoritative work on class has suggested that Britain in the interwar period was effectively a three-layered society with working, middle and upper classes. However, he also notes that the period was characterised by many economic, cultural and social changes which meant that in terms of

⁴⁴⁹ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, December 1929, p. 16.

'housing, transport, morals, leisure and dress, society, was becoming more equal and more homogeneous'.⁴⁵⁰ This analysis points to a tension between forces pulling in opposite directions and possibly a blurring of the lines separating the classes, both of which merit further consideration. Given that class was generally reflected in the hierarchical structures to be found at the workplace and also in the way that sports and leisure were organised and accessed, Robinsons provides a useful case study, especially as company literature tends to value the idea of owners, managers and worker pulling together and having a common interest in the firm. It has been suggested of Britain in the inter-war period, for example, that 'golf was on its way to becoming a badge of middle-class status'.⁴⁵¹ Were social indicators of class difference of this kind evident in the experience of the workforce at Robinson & Sons, despite the company's sports and social provision?

Ferdynand Zweig observed in his classic study of working men that 'sport has an indescribable fascination for the British worker', before going on to claim that 'there is no doubt that sport forms the best redress against the routine and monotony of life and work'.⁴⁵² For many on the left it has also been characterised as a powerful distraction which, either by accident or design, has ensured that the working class have failed to follow the path of revolution. Significantly, in June 1921, during a phase in British industrial relations which was characterised by widespread trade union militancy, *The Link* addressed the relationship between sport and revolution directly by referring readers to a 'Red' German newspaper which had condemned football as a 'counter-revolutionary device invented by the Capitalists for the sole purpose of diverting the minds of the young'. Football, it claimed,

⁴⁵⁰ D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 128.

⁴⁵¹ Stevenson, *British Society*, p. 389.

⁴⁵² F. Zweig, *The British Worker*, Pelican Books, 1952, p. 124.

was drawing thousands of working men away from Bolshevism and political agitation. At Robinsons, *The Link* responded to these arguments by praising football, arguing that 'if it teaches us to play the game of life in a sounder, saner spirit, then it is more than a recreation. It is a national asset'.⁴⁵³ 'The Communist Party of Great Britain, set up in 1920,' as Peter Clarke has observed, 'was tiny; and the fact that it took its orders from Moscow was not so much sinister as inhibiting'.⁴⁵⁴ So, in political terms, *The Link's* comments represent an over-reaction. However, the positive affirmation of sport and its benefits is significant in providing an insight into what motivated this aspect of Robinsons' industrial welfare strategy.

Arguably, the idea that sport could be used to keep class warfare at bay lay beneath a report of a cricket match played by the works team against Holymoorside in 1922. Robinsons batted first and made 71; Holymoorside managed only 52 in reply, at which point their captain threw down his bat in disgust, having been given out by the umpire. The cricket section notes in *The Link* regarded this as a 'regrettable instance' and 'unsportsmanlike', adding that it was a pity that some could not 'play the game in the right spirit'.⁴⁵⁵ Cricket was widely regarded as another 'national asset'. Lincoln Allison underlines this point when he states that amateur values predominated and this meant that the game was 'about gentlemanliness, leisure, loyalty and decency'.⁴⁵⁶ It was a sport which recognised hierarchies but there were certain boundaries that could not be crossed and birth and

⁴⁵³ CCL, 052.51 3703, *The Link*, No.27, June 1921, p. 26.

⁴⁵⁴ P. Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1996), p.106.

⁴⁵⁵ CCL, 052.51 3703, *The Link*, September 1923, p. 29.

⁴⁵⁶ L. Allison, *Amateurism in Sport: An Analysis and a Defence*, (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 5.

breeding always counted when it came to appointing a captain.⁴⁵⁷ However, it also provided opportunities for different classes to play on the same side or, if they did play against each other, to do so in a gentlemanly way which would not undermine the social order. It seems likely that at Robinsons, as at Raleigh, the works cricket team drew on talent from both the office and the shop floor; any tensions arising from inter-departmental competitions would be minimised if players respected the traditions of the game and, unlike the captain of Holymoorside, observed its gentlemanly conventions.

Reports of sports and social activities in *The Link* indicate that awareness of class and hierarchy helped to shape the way that they were organised at Robinsons in the interwar period. At the Horticultural Society Show in 1929 the 'Directors' Gardeners' Classes' were abandoned because of lack of entries, but it is significant that they existed at all. That said, prizes in the various fruit, vegetable and flower sections were awarded to both shop-floor and office employees, though the fact that they were usually presented by members of the Robinson family meant that there were frequent reminders of the company paternalism and opportunities for workers to behave in a suitably deferential fashion.⁴⁵⁸ Set-piece sports and social events – both before and after the war – often fulfilled this function. Consider the report in the *Staveley News* of the annual Works v Staff Cricket match in 1950, played on a neutral ground in Lichfield. At the end of the match (which the staff won), the teams took refreshments together and the Works General Manager, Mr. G. E. Lunt, gave a speech as well as presenting the trophy.⁴⁵⁹ From an industrial welfare perspective this appears to

⁴⁵⁷ See S. Wagg, "'Time Gentlemen Please': the Decline of Amateur Captaincy in English County Cricket", *Contemporary British History*, 14 (2), (2000), 31-59.

⁴⁵⁸ CCL, 02.1 594, *The Link*, September-December 1929, pp.12-26.

⁴⁵⁹ CCL, 338.2 A678, *The Staveley News*, Autumn 1950, p.42.

have been a satisfactory outcome in every respect. Robinsons was very like its neighbour in this respect with various Works v Staff fixtures in the inter-departmental league. Matches played by the First Eleven against 'The Tradesmen' and 'Dr Fine's XI' also suggest that cricketers at Robinsons were aware of where they stood in the social hierarchy whether inside or outside the factory gates.⁴⁶⁰

Asa Briggs influential work has argued that 'differences of social class were usually the most important factor in differentiating leisure patterns', observing that the 'dance hall was far removed from the hunt ball'.⁴⁶¹ There are numerous examples of this type of social/occupational differentiation in company literature though we should, perhaps, be wary of reading too much into what was often the simplest and most convenient way of setting up sports clubs and other societies. Furthermore, office workers (staff) were just as likely to form clubs - such as the Badminton Club at Robinsons - as shop-floor workers, thus indicating that the 'bottom-up' process of initiating works-related sport and social activities worked at all levels of the occupational hierarchy. Social demarcation in sport was probably most evident at Robinsons in connection with badminton and tennis. Most of the members of the Badminton Club, formed in 1935, were drawn from the Tennis Club, but they probably had more in common than a liking for racquet sports. Tennis, as McKibbin has pointed out, was essentially a sport patronised by the middle classes. Its rapid expansion in the interwar years – there were 1,620 clubs affiliated to the Lawn Tennis Association in 1925 and 3,220 in 1938 – was closely tied to the expansion of middle-class suburbia.⁴⁶² Kevin Jeffreys original research has pointed out that tennis was 'not entirely off limits to aspiring

⁴⁶⁰ CCL, 052.51 6359, *The Link*, June 1955, p.36.

⁴⁶¹ A. Briggs, *A Social History of England*, (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1994), p .316.

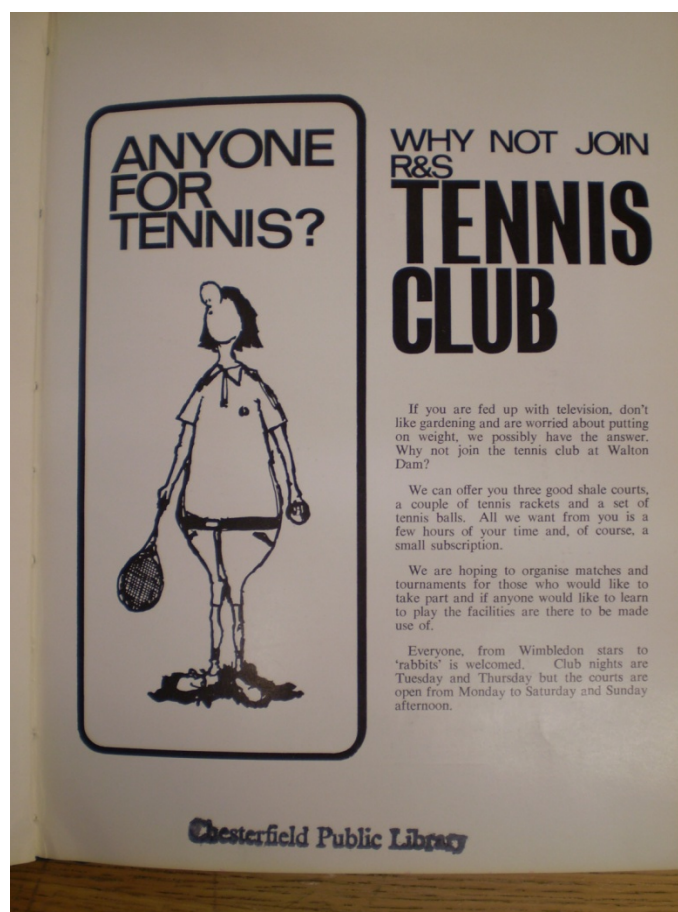
⁴⁶² McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp. 361-362.

families', but Dan Maskell and Fred Perry were exceptions.⁴⁶³ It seems clear that both badminton and tennis at Robinsons reflected this pattern in that their members were 'staff' rather than 'works'. With membership falling rapidly – it was predicted that only five would join for the 1950 season – the Badminton Club complained of 'lack of interest in the workrooms [which] seems to be due to the attitude that Badminton is a game to be played by the staff only'.⁴⁶⁴ It seems that the attitudes of blue-collar workers were driven by a pre-determined view, which may or may not have been justified, that the Badminton Club was not for them. Tennis, well provided for at Robinsons with 'three good shale courts at Walton Dam', may have experienced a similar image problem. The advertisement from 1970 reproduced below asked 'Anyone for tennis?' and stressed that players of all standards were welcome, but this also implied that tennis may not always have been seen as a game for everyone.

⁴⁶³ K. Jefferys, 'Fred Perry and British Tennis: "Fifty Years to Honor a Winner"', *Sport in History*, 29, (1), (2009),

7.

⁴⁶⁴ DCRO, D5395/7/4/2, RWSSC, Badminton Club Report, 23 March 1949.



2:6: Advertisement for the Tennis Club at Robinsons

Source: *The Link* June 1970, Chesterfield Central Library.

Photographs of a dinner in 1970 at Markham & Co. Ltd, a neighbouring Chesterfield firm, reveal middle-aged men sitting at lines of tables enjoying their drink and cigarettes. The accompanying report, however, suggests uneasiness in the relationship between management and the workforce: 'On this one evening of the year we welcomed the Directors as guests and would be friendly to them'.⁴⁶⁵ It was as if hostilities had been temporarily suspended for the occasion. Industrial relations at Robinsons appear to have been generally harmonious over the period 1918-70 and it seems probable that the

⁴⁶⁵ CCL, L14707, L338.2 CHE, *Broad Oaks*, (House Magazine of Markham & Co. Ltd), Spring 1970, p.12.

company's paternalistic style and commitment to industrial welfare were important factors. Nevertheless, social class and occupational hierarchy were an underlying presence throughout, as they appear to have been at other comparable firms, and these shaped the works-based sports and social activities on offer. As we have seen they helped to determine what teams you might play for, what clubs you might join and which particular activities you might decide to take up. In reporting these activities *The Link*, while reiterating the message that employees were part of the Robinsons family, also reminded them of where they fitted into the overall scheme and, in particular, whether they were 'works' or 'staff'. It is important to ask whether gender played a similar role in shaping the sports and social provision at Robinsons.

Women, Work and Leisure at Robinsons

Women comprised almost forty per cent of the workforce in England and Wales in 1918, a total of 4,940,000 workers.⁴⁶⁶ The war had seen many women working in what were traditionally seen as jobs for men though this was often a temporary arrangement. After the war, as men returned from the armed forces, the proportion of women in the workforce dropped and averaged about 35 per cent in the interwar years. Young, unmarried women were disproportionately represented; Long and Marland have estimated that in 1922 three million girls spent 'at least one-third of each day in a factory, workshop or domestic service'.⁴⁶⁷ Moreover, there was variation from industry to industry and factory to factory.

⁴⁶⁶ G. Holloway, *Women and Work in Britain since 1840*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), pp. 130-144.

⁴⁶⁷ V. Long and H. Marland, *From Danger and Motherhood to Health and Beauty: Health Advice for the Factory Girl in Early Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 6.

In Coventry at GEC, women made up fifty per cent of the workforce in 1921 rising to 57 per cent in 1939.⁴⁶⁸

The Second World War was a watershed. Thereafter the proportion of women in the workforce rose at each successive census. Between 1951 and 1976, as Pollard helpfully observes, the male labour force remained fairly constant at around 15.9 million whereas the female labour force grew; indeed, 'the whole of the increase in the working population of 3 million between those dates was ... furnished by women'.⁴⁶⁹ Moreover, as Benson has emphasised, it is important to consider the marital status of women employees; Single women had always worked; married women began to work in growing numbers' and though this trend was especially clear in the last three decades of the twentieth century it was well established by the early 1970s. Men and women did not necessarily experience work in the same way; for example, more women were employed in the service sector than in manufacturing and they 'were always less involved than men in full-time, permanent, paid employment'.⁴⁷⁰

Nevertheless, over the course of the period under consideration in this thesis, women workers were increasingly exposed to works-based sport and recreation. As Jennifer Hargreaves contends, the increase in leisure opportunities for women is seen in

⁴⁶⁸ J. Castle, 'Factory Work for Women: Courtaulds & GEC between the Wars', in B. Lancaster and T. Mason (eds), *Life and Labour in a Twentieth-Century City: The Experience of Coventry* (Coventry: Cryfield Press, 1986), p. 142.

⁴⁶⁹ S. Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy 1914-1990*, 4th ed., (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p. 291.

⁴⁷⁰ J. Benson, *Affluence and Authority: a Social History of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Hodder Education, 2005), pp. 151-2.

tandem with the 'progressive movement in the history of industrial society'.⁴⁷¹ The earliest issues of *The Link*, published before the end of the First World War, claimed to be 'truly representative of the works' and female employees did find a place on its pages, albeit in a feature with the patronising title 'Our Women's Corner' where attention was drawn to a bazaar that had been organised by women in aid of comforts for troops serving on the Western Front.⁴⁷² Although there is nothing to suggest that attitudes to women at Robinsons were different than those likely to be found elsewhere they do not appear to have been discriminated against at Robinsons in terms of being invited to participate in sport. In September 1919, *The Link* in its 'Notes on Sport' was urging more women to come forward to take advantage of the activities on offer: 'We hold out a strong invitation to the ladies to come in and join us. A special night has been arranged for ladies only ... they will be ensured a hearty welcome'. Those interested were guided to Miss Barnham in the General Office.⁴⁷³ There may have been an element of continuity in some women's sports activities while some others were new. Reports from 1922 suggest that an Inter-Departmental Hockey Cup competition had been running for some years even though the Robinsons team had only just completed its first season in the Sheffield League.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ J. Hargreaves, 'The Promise and Problems of Women's Leisure' and Sport, in C. Rojek (ed), *Leisure for Leisure*, (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 130.

⁴⁷² CCL, 052.51 3691, *The Link*, September 1918, p. 10.

⁴⁷³ CCL, 052.51 3690, *The Link*, September 1919, p. 29.

⁴⁷⁴ CCL, 052.51 3702, *The Link*, June 1922, p. 23.



2:7: Inter-Departmental Hockey Finalists 1922.

Source: *The Link* June 1922, Chesterfield Central Library.

It is clear that the range of works-based sports available to women at Robinsons had expanded significantly by the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1929, the Swimming Club, which had been founded in 1922 for men and women, was reporting another successful season. However, though the men's section had held some interesting matches against other works clubs, no such matches could be arranged for the ladies, suggesting that women's interest may have been purely recreational.⁴⁷⁵ The RWSSC secretary's annual Report for 1931 gives some idea of how the range of sports available to women had

⁴⁷⁵ CCL, 052.51 594, *The Link*, September 1929, p. 25.

increased over the previous ten years with members subscribing to the hockey, cricket, netball, swimming and tennis sections with the ladies cricket team receiving particular praise. That said, in a two-page document, only four lines are allotted to women's sport.⁴⁷⁶ It is possible that some external influences were important. Long and Marland have indicated that during the late 1920s into the 1930s, under the sponsorship of the National Council of Girls' Clubs, games such as tennis, netball and swimming were being actively promoted.⁴⁷⁷

Peter Davies, in a pioneering article, has pointed out that the inter-war years witnessed a remarkable blossoming of women's cricket', especially in northern textile towns.⁴⁷⁸ This was very evident at Robinsons, not least because *The Link* was at times very keen to report the success of the women's team carrying the firm's name. The 1933 season was very successful – thirteen matches were won, one drawn and only one lost – and it was hoped to run a second XI for the following season.⁴⁷⁹ The September issue of *The Link* reported that the team had won the Bakewell Hospital Carnival Cup and that the trophy was on display in the surgery at the Walton works; four of the team had been selected to play for Miss Jackson's Derbyshire Eleven against Nottingham County. It seems clear that the firm was keen to highlight the sporting successes of its women with matches against other works teams, such as Boots, Pearson's Potteries and Players' of Nottingham, singled out for

⁴⁷⁶ DCRO, D5395/7/4/1, RWSSC, Secretary's Annual Report 1931.

⁴⁷⁷ Long and Marland, *From Danger and Motherhood*, p. 14.

⁴⁷⁸ Peter J. Davies, 'Bowling Maidens Over: 1931 and the beginnings of Women's Cricket in a Yorkshire Town', *Sport in History*, 28, (2), (2000), 280, 284-5.

⁴⁷⁹ DCRO, D5395/7/4/1, Robinson & Co, Sport Club, Eighth Annual Report, 1933.

mention.⁴⁸⁰ Women's cricket continued to provide Robinsons with cause for celebration when it became affiliated to the Women's Cricket Association in 1936, the first in Derbyshire to do so. Hockey, however, appears to have been the most popular women's sport at the firm in the 1930s with four teams; again the selection of three players for the county was celebrated in *The Link*.⁴⁸¹ Fiona Skillen explains, that employers in the interwar period often sought to promote themselves by highlighting their own 'generous' welfare provision and successful women's teams provided Robinson's with an opportunity to do this.⁴⁸² It may or may not have helped the company in recruiting and retaining staff, but the overall impact on the company's image was likely to have been positive.

Women's sport at Robinsons appears to have been disrupted during the Second World War, along with the provision of recreational activities more generally. Some team games – cricket, hockey, and netball - appear to have continued in some form. *The Link* reported in 1942 that a girls' cricket team had organised a game against the boys. Unfortunately rain had stopped play and the game had been rescheduled for the following Tuesday; 'only one boy turned out, the girls claimed a victory!!!'⁴⁸³ Much of the recreational activity open to workers at Robinsons, as at Raleigh, was linked to the war effort. The Knitting Circle spent many hours knitting socks, gloves and pullovers for those in various theatres of war raising the money to pay for the wool from dances held at Bradbury Hall on Wednesday evenings.⁴⁸⁴ At the end of the war the firm organised the 'Robinson Workers

⁴⁸⁰ CCL, 052.51 1051, *The Link*, September 1933, p. 35.

⁴⁸¹ DCRO, D5395/7/4/1, Robinson & Sons Ltd, Sports Club Eleventh Annual Report, 1936.

⁴⁸² Skillen, 'When women look their worst', p. 134.

⁴⁸³ CCL, 052.51 3697, *The Link*, September 1942, p. 15.

⁴⁸⁴ *Robinson & Sons Ltd 1839-1989*, p.27.

Welcome Home Party' for service personnel. Here, a Variety Concert was arranged along with a dance and supper. At the close of the night guests left with a souvenir, men receiving cigarette cases and women compacts and face powder.⁴⁸⁵

As Hargreaves has observed, despite the great increase in the numbers of women – especially married women – in paid employment after the Second World War, women's position in the labour market remained marginal to that of men, notably, the female workforce in general were less well-paid and occupied less secure jobs.⁴⁸⁶ However, between 1951 and 1971 the percentage of married women in the labour force grew from 26 to 49 per cent.⁴⁸⁷ This meant that more married women than before would have been exposed to opportunities to pursue workplace-based sport and recreation though it is difficult to measure the extent to which this was taken up. Attitudes towards women at work, especially in manufacturing industries, changed over the post-war period, but the pace of change was fairly gradual as works magazines indicate. An account of a sports evening organised by the Foundry Sales department at Staveley in 1953, lauded male competitors for their prowess; women were praised simply for 'adding charm and skill' as they attempted to master the 'masculine technique at bowls'. Photographs of women at this event focus largely on the 'egg and spoon' race.⁴⁸⁸ At another of Robinsons' neighbouring companies, the sweet manufacturer Trebor, the highlight of the year appeared to be the annual 'Miss Candy Queen Beauty Competition'. Young girls from the firm's factories and offices around the country made their way to Cutlers Hall in Sheffield,

⁴⁸⁵ Robinson & Sons Ltd 1839 -1989, p. 28.

⁴⁸⁶ Hargreaves, *'Leisure for Leisure'*, p. 135.

⁴⁸⁷ Holloway, *Women and Work*, p. 197.

⁴⁸⁸ CCL, 338.2 A678, *The Staveley News*, October 1953, pp. 168, 172.

where they paraded in front of the judges, who included popular comedian Jimmy Jewel, wearing candy-striped shorts and white blouses. Trebor's magazine devoted two pages to this story as well as publishing full page photographs of winning girls.⁴⁸⁹ Beauty contests were popular in the 1950s and 1960s. As Langhamer observes they 'intensified the idea of beauty'.⁴⁹⁰ Advertisers at this time found the combination of women and beauty hard to resist and attractive young women were often used to promote companies and their products.

At Robinsons, towards the end of the period under review, it is clear that a number of well-established women's sports had survived. The firm's netball team, for example, continued to play matches against teams from other companies, such as Smith & Nephew, a long-standing arrangement. Cricket, seems to have been played, though less seriously than before the war; a Ladies versus Gents Cricket match ended in victory for the 'Ladies' although their opponents were 'looking forward to a little more support from the umpire' on the return leg. Newer sports in which female staff participated actively included ten-pin bowling; *The Link* showed great interest on the competition for the Ladies Trophy.⁴⁹¹ Perhaps the way in which the company magazine most obviously recognised the presence of a larger proportion of married women in the workforce was by including a 'Women's Page' with features on cooking and home decor as well as fashion. 'Women's Corner' in the

⁴⁸⁹ CCL, *Working Together*, September 1959, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁹⁰ C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.

44.

⁴⁹¹ CCL, 052.51 L10310, *The Link*, September 1970, pp. 35, 37.

June 1966 issue is devoted almost entirely to the types of vinyl suitable for bathrooms and kitchens.⁴⁹²

Gender stereotyping was evident in other ways. Fundraising events, such as charity football matches, had often taken the form of a novelty sports event involving women. An all-women's match in aid of the Swimcap Fund, held at Robinsons' Walton Dam ground in 1972, saw the 'Roundbox Sexy Smarties' take on the 'Plastic Snazzy Popsies', with local football celebrity Ernie Moss of Chesterfield FC kicking the game off.⁴⁹³ This event is noteworthy on a number of levels. Firstly, it reminds us of how often women's sport was used in this context over the years; secondly, the novelty of an all-women match and the presence of Ernie Moss indicates how a company like Robinsons was anxious to use women's sport to promote a positive image in the Chesterfield community. Finally, it suggests that, in some ways, women's participation in sport was being regarded less seriously by the early 1970s than when the industrial welfare movement had been at its most influential in the interwar and immediate post-war years. A newspaper report which pointed out that women were being referred to as 'Robinson's Angels' in recognition of their fund-raising efforts for the local Cheshire Homes, suggests that even at a self-consciously progressive employer, traditional attitudes could remain entrenched.⁴⁹⁴

Conclusions

⁴⁹² CCL, 052.51 8957, *The Link*, June 1966, p. 16.

⁴⁹³ CCL, 052.51 L10898, *The Link*, June 1972, p. 32.

⁴⁹⁴ CCL, *The Star* (Sheffield), 1 April 1972. Newspaper cutting from the *Sheffield Star*.

The picture that emerges of Robinson & Sons over the fifty years post 1918 is not dissimilar to that of the previous case study, the Raleigh Bicycle Company, or indeed many other manufacturing firms committed to an industrial welfare policy. The aftermath of the Great War witnessed sustained growth in the field of recreation and leisure which was duly facilitated by many manufacturing firms, especially those which regarded themselves as progressive in industrial welfare terms or were committed to a paternalistic relationship with their workers. Writing about industrial welfare in the USA, Stuart Brandes influential work has suggested that in these circumstances 'recreation could become a form of advertisement' and the resources devoted to sport and leisure by Robinsons suggest that the company saw it as an effective way of enhancing its reputation in and around Chesterfield and more widely. Brandes has also suggested that recreation has a positive link with recruitment, though this is harder to prove.⁴⁹⁵ Stephen Jones concluded that 'only vague assumptions' can be made when addressing the relationship between works recreation and the retaining and attracting of staff.⁴⁹⁶ There is little or no positive evidence to indicate that the sports and other recreational opportunities on offer at Robinsons made it attractive to prospective employees, though as other firms in and around Chesterfield offered similar packages, it would probably not have been in the company's interests to have fallen behind in this respect. However, there is some evidence to suggest that membership of works-based clubs and societies helped to strengthen the bond between employer and employee and, as at Raleigh, this may have been a factor in persuading some workers to stay with the firm.

⁴⁹⁵ S. D. Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 78.

⁴⁹⁶ Jones, 'The Survival of Industrial Paternalism', p. 10.

Though Robinsons employed fewer workers than Raleigh a similar spread of sporting and recreational activities could be found at both works. Coverage in *The Link* suggests that team sports, such as football, cricket (for both men and women), hockey and netball were prominent, but perhaps this is because they helped to publicise the company most effectively on a regular basis. As at Raleigh, rugby was one team sport that does not appear to feature, probably reflecting the local preference for football rather than a prejudice against what was often seen in England as a middle-class game. In a rugby union stronghold such as Coventry works rugby clubs were not unusual. It seems likely that the absence of key individuals keen to pursue a particular sporting interest may have impacted on the pattern of sports and recreational activity generally. This may help to explain, for example, the strength of women's cricket at Robinsons and the absence of competitive women's football. As at Raleigh, what was happening outside the factory gates supplies an important context and helps to explain why, for instance, references to women's sport in *The Link* serve largely to reinforce traditional notions of femininity, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. It may also explain why company sport is given less coverage at the end of our period than at the beginning as workers were by then pursuing other leisure activities open to them away from the factory. More particularly, the pattern of sporting provision reflects changing fashions in sport, hence the emergence of judo and ten-pin bowling in the 1960s, and also in the pattern of recreational provision, which expands to incorporate motoring and photography as workers became more affluent.

The works-based sports and recreation provision at Robinsons appears to have been shaped by both 'top down' and 'bottom up' initiatives. It has been noted in connection with the Midland Railway Company that manual workers tended to take the lead when it

came to participation in competitive sport, supported by clerical and supervisory grades. At Robinsons, the football and cricket clubs reflected this pattern, both being founded after meetings of shop-floor workers in 1919.⁴⁹⁷ However, not all clubs and societies at Robinsons emerged via this route. Some organisations, as we have seen, were initiated from the top, notably the Operatic and Dramatic Society. 'From the Society's inception Miss Robinson gave unstintingly of her time', so the Golden Anniversary programme revealed; 'she it was who pioneered the society'.⁴⁹⁸ Florence Robinson's active and very visible presence over many years in this area of company-sponsored recreation conveyed a message about the firm's good intentions towards its workforce. This was one of the ways in which Robinsons' owners, committed as they were to a paternalistic version of industrial welfare, were able shape the leisure activities of their workers. The provision of financial and logistical support – whether it was facilities for sport or meeting the costs of staging Gilbert and Sullivan – was critical in subsidising and underwriting activities, whether they had been initiated by the Robinson family or workers on the factory floor.

Finally, it is clear that Robinsons were well aware of the symbolic significance of occasions that brought employers and employees together - such events were especially important. Works dances over the period could bridge both ends of the workforce hierarchy; during 1936 the 'happy spirit of co-operation' between directors and their employees was evident at a birthday social function at Bradbury Hall. Directors handed out gifts to factory employees as they celebrated the anniversary of the opening of this key

⁴⁹⁷ G. Revill, "'Railway Derby'": Occupational Community, Paternalism and Corporate Culture 1850-90', *Urban History*, 28, (3), (2001), 399; CCL, 052.51 3690, *The Link*, June 1919, p. 9.

⁴⁹⁸ DCRO, D5395/7/6/6, Robinson & Sons Ltd, Operatic Club Golden Anniversary Programme.

facility.⁴⁹⁹ However, with dances as with many other activities, Robinsons' workforce were capable of taking the lead and 'chain dances' were regularly organised by shop-floor operatives in the interwar period. Workers used the dances to socialise with colleagues, celebrate the previous season's sporting achievements and often to raise money for good causes. At Robinsons, as at Raleigh, much sports and social activity originated on the shop-floor or in the office but the financial support of the directors and the Robinson family was crucial in ensuring that these activities could be sustained.

⁴⁹⁹ CCL, 052.51 1325, *The Link*, December 1936, p. 25.

Chapter 4

The Bank of England, London

It has been suggested by the gentlemen whose names appear below that a general meeting should be called to consider the advisability of forming a Sports Club in the Bank of England. The primary object is to select teams, representative of the whole Bank, to compete in the various forms of athletics.⁵⁰⁰

The Bank of England lies at the heart of the British economy and has a history dating back to 1694; it has been located in Threadneedle Street, in the the City of London, itself at the heart of Britain's services sector, since 1724. Established primarily to handle the National Debt, it gradually began to acquire the features of a central bank, especially after its functions were governed under the Bank Charter Act of 1844 which linked the issue of banknotes to the amount of gold in its reserves and gave it a monopoly on note issue in England and Wales. In terms of organisation it had certain special features, notably that its operations and policy were overseen by a Governor appointed by the Court of the Bank of England composed of representatives of various merchant banks. In the twentieth century,

⁵⁰⁰ Circular to Bank of England staff [1905], cited in A.J.N. Bond and M.O.H. Doughty, *The House: a History of the Bank of England Sports Club 1908-1983* (London: The Bank of England, 1984), p. 9.

the policies pursued by the Bank were often politically controversial and the Labour Party, in particular, regarded it with suspicion after its role in the financial crisis of 1931 that led to the fall of Ramsay MacDonald's government. Thus the Bank of England was first on the list of institutions to be nationalised after Clement Attlee's Labour government was swept to power in 1945 and the Bank of England Act, through which this was achieved, followed about six months later after a period of delicate negotiations between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor. In what appeared to be a relatively seamless transition, the Bank of England passed into public ownership on 1 March 1946; 'so far as status – apart from ownership - is concerned, the Bank's unique and responsible position is maintained', the *Financial Times* had noted when the details of the new arrangements had first been published.⁵⁰¹ Writing just after the end of our period William Clarke stressed both its historic role and the many responsibilities the Bank had accumulated over the years. 'The Bank of England', he observed, 'remains at the centre of the City, physically and functionally'. Its principal responsibilities were to issue banknotes, to borrow on behalf of the government by issuing securities, to act as the government's banker, to hold accounts of clearing banks, merchant banks etc, to control the money, and to supervise the banking system and the financial markets.⁵⁰²

In order to fulfil its many roles the Bank became a major employer, especially of clerical labour. Initially a male preserve, employment opportunities for women increased, especially after the First World War. This was driven not just by the Bank's expanding

⁵⁰¹ See D. Kynaston, *The City of London*, vol. 4, *A Club No More* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001), p. 12.

⁵⁰² W. M. Clarke, *How the City of London Works: An Introduction to its Financial Markets*, 2nd edn., (London: Waterlow Publishers, 1981), p.24; see also P. Coggan, *The Money Machine: How the City Works: a Report from the Inside* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 75-82.

growing responsibilities but by changes in the way that routine business was processed. David Kynaston has observed that it was 'the gradual mechanisation of office life' that was important in this respect with women employed in significant numbers as typists, telephonists and machine operators compared to pre-1914. According to Kynaston, the Bank of England was not quite in the vanguard of mechanisation, but once it accepted the necessity for change it applied itself with characteristic thoroughness'; fanfold typing machines had been introduced by the mid-1930s as well as Mercedes accounting machines and Hollerith tabulating machines, these changes leading to dramatic improvements in efficiency. It was discovered that 2.75 women plus one machine could do the same amount of work as four men using traditional methods. Thus, though the number of men employed at the Bank went up from 1,900 to 2,350 between 1926 and 1939, the number of women on the staff increased at a significantly faster rate, from 1,200 to 1,700, over the same period. Women, of course, were paid less than men in equivalent jobs, were often overlooked when it came to promotion, and were forced to resign if they married.⁵⁰³

For clerks in the City of London hours were long and opportunities to pursue spare-time interests were limited, especially as banks worked through into Saturday afternoons well into the twentieth century. Additionally, many clerks were commuting from the suburbs, therefore opportunities to take part in sport and other recreational activities were logistically difficult, though this may have applied more to the lower ranks. 'In the pre-railway age', as Richard Holt has helpfully observed, 'clerks, in particular, lived in or near the

⁵⁰³ D. Kynaston, *The City of London*, vol. 3, *Illusions of Gold 1914-1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), pp. 285-86.

City and walked to work. From the 1860s all this changed'.⁵⁰⁴ It is important to locate employees at the Bank of England in the context of these wider historical developments. Numbers employed in white-collar occupations grew throughout the period under study as manufacturing, mining and other heavy industries began to decline in relation to the service sector, and public sector employment also began to rise. Between 1920 and 1938, employment in white-collar occupations increased by 27 per cent, of which a high proportion were female. The post Second World War period continued this trend with the number of workers in insurance and banking for example increasing by some 220,000 between 1948 and 1965.⁵⁰⁵ Between 1950 and 1981, employment in insurance, banking and finance was the fastest growing area of service sector employment, increasing by 3.3 per cent annually on average.⁵⁰⁶ Thus many employers in the service sector, like the Bank of England, were faced with similar challenges to their counterparts in industry in that they had to manage workforces of a significant size, while recruiting and retaining staff in a competitive labour market. Increasingly, they found themselves responding to staff initiatives especially in the area of sport and social recreation.

Michael Heller's important work on the provision made for London clerks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century aside, the industrial welfare of office-based, service sector workers has been relatively neglected.⁵⁰⁷ The evolution of provision at both Raleigh

⁵⁰⁴ R. Holt, 'The Amateur Body and the Middle-Class Man: Work, Health and Style in Victorian Britain', *Sport in History*, 26 (3), (2006), 357.

⁵⁰⁵ J. E. Cronin, *Labour and Society in Britain 1918-1979*, (London: Batsford Academic, 1984), pp. 56, 147.

⁵⁰⁶ S. Pollard, *The Development of the British Economy 1914-1990* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), pp. 235-36.

⁵⁰⁷ M. Heller, 'Sport, Bureaucracies and London Clerks 1880-1939', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (5), (2008), 579-614.

and Robinsons has indicated that sports and social activities were in evidence to some extent before the First World War, with team sports, especially football and hockey, to the fore, and a similar pattern can be observed at the Bank of England where team games, including rugby, were occasionally played in the 1880s.⁵⁰⁸ However, the Bank was a little ahead of both Raleigh and Robinsons in investing £15,000 in extensive sports facilities for its staff as early as 1907.⁵⁰⁹ The palatial and well-tended facilities at Priory Lane, Roehampton, helped to ensure that a variety of sports flourished under the banner of the Bank of England Sports Club in the interwar period and beyond while non-sporting activities, such as chess and amateur dramatics, also had their place. As at the manufacturing companies already investigated, the provision and take-up of activities was subject to change over time as indicated by the demise of some activities and the rise of others as they went in and out of fashion; this helps to explain the rise of motoring and ten-pin bowling in the 1960s, for example.

This chapter will continue to address the key questions posed in chapters one and two -in addressing both sport and social provision in equal measure alongside the question - was workplace sports and recreational provision at the bank initiated by the management or was it a bottom-up process? In addition, however, this chapter will seek to explore differences between the kind of provision seen at Raleigh and Robinsons and what was on offer at the Bank and to explain how they came about. It might be suggested, for instance, that the absence of rugby union teams at the manufacturing firms and the fact that the Bank of England was, for many years, able to field no less than four teams – involving a total

⁵⁰⁸ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 22.

⁵⁰⁹ R.S. Sayers, *The Bank of England 1891-1944*, vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 310.

of sixty players – is probably a function of the Bank's geographical location and the higher proportion of middle-class men who had learned rugby at their public schools whom the Bank employed. It might also be argued that the different gender balance at the Bank, where the proportion of female staff, almost all working in offices, was higher than at Raleigh or Robinsons, helped to ensure that the package of available activities was different.

The remainder of this chapter will trace the evolution of sports and social provision at the Bank of England in four sections. As with Raleigh and Robinsons, the first of these sections will address the origins of workplace-based recreational activity for Bank staff, focusing especially on the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. The second of these sections will review the development of the Men's Sports Club across the whole period c.1918-70 and the third will explore the sporting activities of the banks' women employees. It is important to point out here that staff at Bank headquarters in Threadneedle Street formed two quite separate clubs to organise sport and leisure activities and that these operated independently of each other, much cross referencing will be evident throughout the course of the chapter however. This separation will not preclude discussion of common themes, such as class and occupational hierarchy, but it will make it easier to locate workplace-based sport and leisure in the context of the so-called 'white blouse revolution', the significant increase in female employment that occurred in the City of London at the turn of the century. The first women were employed at the Bank in 1893 and it quickly developed a reputation for taking on 'well bred young women'.⁵¹⁰ In the concluding section, the raft of non-sports - drama clubs, debating societies and poetry groups - is examined. On first inspection it would seem there is a distinct separation between the sports club and more general social and leisure pursuits; company literature, including *The Old Lady*, the

⁵¹⁰ *Women in the Bank: Their History: 1894-2008*, (London: The Bank of England, nd), p. 1.

Banks house magazine, clearly demarcates the two, though there are clearly connections between them and some cross-membership. Again, the differences between these activities at the Bank and similar provision in the manufacturing sector will be identified and explained.

The Bank, Recreation and London: Leisure Activity to c.1918

As the number of independent banks diminished in the late nineteenth century, the number of bank clerks increased. Bank mergers and takeovers helped to create a more stable banking system and as branch networks were established the number of clerks in England and Wales grew dramatically from 1,287 in 1871, to 20,793 in 1891 and 40,379 in 1911.⁵¹¹ Developments at the Bank of England, at the apex of this pyramid, reflected this trend with the number of clerks increasing from 900 in 1860 to around 4,000 by 1919.⁵¹² Kynaston has astutely observed that a surge in recruitment just after the First World War caused tensions in some departments where a youthful, clever and ambitious intake sat uncomfortably alongside older staff who were set in their ways, less well qualified and had been appointed at a time when recruitment was often by personal connection.⁵¹³ This new intake was to make a critical contribution to the development of sports and social provision at the Bank.

⁵¹¹ A. J. Seltzer, 'Salaries and Promotion Opportunities in the English Banking Industry, 1890-1936', *Business History*, 52, (5), (2010), 739-40.

⁵¹² E. Hennessy, 'The Governors, Directors and Management of the Bank of England', in R. Roberts and D. Kynaston, (eds), *The Bank of England: Money, Power and Influence 1694-1994*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 203.

⁵¹³ D. Kynaston, *The City of London*, vol. 3, p. 276.

A city the size of London clearly offered many distractions in the form of commercialised entertainment and many opportunities to socialise, not all which would have been regarded as rational or even respectable forms of recreation. The *Financial Times* in 1890 complained about 'a bevy of betting houses ... within half-a-mile radius of the bank and the Stock Exchange' where clerks could place small bets with bookmakers. 'The petty cash box must suffer', it concluded.⁵¹⁴ London's music halls, not all of which were respectable establishments, attracted a total audience estimated at around 14 million in 1890.⁵¹⁵

With such attractions on offer there are indications that banks and other City of London businesses were increasingly likely to look favourably on participation in organised sports and there is evidence of Bank of England employees playing cricket as early as the 1860s. Fixture cards for the firm Messrs. Joseph Travers & Sons reveal four matches played against the Bank of England in 1867 and 1868. There is fragmentary evidence relating to the existence of a Bank rugby team playing occasional matches in the 1880s against teams from other banks. Association football does not appear in any official records at the Bank until 1907, a year before the Sports Club was started, when a team organised by a member of staff took on a team from the Bedfordshires (his brother's regiment), recently runners-up in the Army Cup, at Clapton Orient's ground, winning 3-2. This indicates a reasonable level of competence and suggests that an association football club may have

⁵¹⁴ *Financial Times*, 13 November 1890, cited in D. Porter, "'Speciousness is the Bucketeer's Watchword and Outrageous Effrontery his Capital": Financial Bucket Shops in the City of London, c.1880-1939', in J. Benson and L. Ugolini (eds), *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society since 1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 110.

⁵¹⁵ B. Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 51.

been in existence for a while. One Bank employee, Rupert Sandilands, who played for Old Westminsters and the Corinthians, was capped five times for England between 1892 and 1896, though he may have been advantaged by a selection process which favoured members of the Corinthians club.⁵¹⁶

The willingness of the Bank of England to invest a significant sum to purchase the sports ground at Roehampton may have owed something to the steps that other City of London employers had already undertaken to provide recreational facilities for their staff. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Prudential Assurance's rowing and cricket clubs had not lacked for support; indeed, as Laurie Dennett's useful study has pointed out, the cricket club 'received more support, both moral and financial, than any other club'. When the Prudential's new ground at Penge opened in 1903, W.G. Grace and his London County XI were the first visitors.⁵¹⁷ By this time other City financial institutions had invested in substantial sports facilities. A club for employees of the various private banks had been founded in 1882, the London and Westminster Bank had established its own sports club in 1898, whilst the London and County had spent around £13,000 on its ground and pavilion.⁵¹⁸ It seems likely that this generated pressure on other employers to compete, especially as City clerks were already finding ways of expressing their discontent collectively, as when the so-called City Clerks Alliance campaigned in 1890 against the employment of

⁵¹⁶ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, pp. 22-23; see also D. J. Taylor, *On the Corinthian Spirit: The Decline of Amateurism in Sport*, (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2006), p. 52.

⁵¹⁷ L. Dennett, *A Sense of Security: 150 Years of Prudential*, (Cambridge: Granta Editions, 1998), pp. 156-160.

⁵¹⁸ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 11.

large numbers of foreigners at City firms.⁵¹⁹ Significantly, when the Bank of England moved to establish a Sports Club and took the decision to purchase the site at Roehampton, it seems to have been responding to a groundswell of opinion from below.

It was in 1905 that Mr A.E. Curtis, a clerk in the Private Drawing Office, circulated colleagues and gathered 250 signatures in support of the idea that a meeting should be called with a view to establishing a sports club for bank staff. Subsequently a meeting was held in which Curtis was appointed honorary secretary and an informal committee was formed. A further twelve months passed, however, before a memorandum was circulated by the Bank's directors observing that such a club would 'meet a distinct want', 500 members of staff having by then shown an interest and £543 having been raised towards running costs. It was agreed that some other clubs already in existence – the Library, Luncheon and Rifle Clubs - would merge with the new Sports Club in order to 'get it off the ground'. It helped, no doubt, in justifying the expenditure on the Roehampton ground that the Bank of England Company of the Civil Service Rifle Volunteers would be able to use it for drill. In regard to the way in which the Sports Club came into existence, therefore, the Bank of England had much in common with firms in the manufacturing sector that we have studied in that management appears to have seen some advantage in responding positively to an initiative that had been started by employees. Thereafter, the Bank's role was mainly to fund and facilitate.⁵²⁰

The Bank of England Men's Sports Club c.1918-1945

⁵¹⁹ D. Kynaston, *The City of London*, vol. 2, *Golden Years 1890-1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995), pp. 33-34.

⁵²⁰ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, pp. 9, 11.

Though details of provision pre-1918 are fragmentary, it is possible to trace the evolution of sports and social provision in the interwar period in some detail through *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*, the Bank of England's in-house magazine, which first appeared in 1921. *The Old Lady* serves here as an important primary source but its role as an active agent in promoting recreational activities should also be acknowledged from the start. It should also be noted here that *The Old Lady* was not the only magazine produced for Bank employees; the *Britannia Quarterly*, was produced for those who worked at the St Luke's Printing Works situated at the old St Luke's asylum, where printing operations were located from 1920.⁵²¹ Though the focus in this chapter is primarily on the clerical staff who worked a mile away at the Bank's headquarters in Threadneedle Street, the activities recorded in the *Britannia Quarterly* often provides an interesting counterpoint to those covered by *The Old Lady* not least because the printing works had a more working-class ambience. Initially, the *Quarterly* seemed sceptical about the prospects for sport at St Luke's; a printing office, it observed, 'has never been looked upon as an ideal ground for the propagation of athletes'. It did not help that it had 'attained a certain amount of unenviable notoriety for its activity in the production of tuberculosis'.⁵²² In due course, however, St Luke's developed a significant range of clubs and societies that belied this rather gloomy editorial attitude and these will be referred to from time to time.

By 1918 the Bank of England Sports Club was already celebrating its tenth anniversary. Situated on an 18-acre plot in the affluent suburbia of Roehampton, South-West London, it was to become the home base for a host of organised sports and social

⁵²¹ E. Hennessy, *A Domestic History of the Bank of England 1930-1960*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 168.

⁵²² Bank of England Archive [hereafter BoE], PW1/1, *Britannia Quarterly*, September 1919, 30.

activities. The site was not used exclusively for these purposes; it was also used for the Bank's records office and was the location of a furnace 'for consuming bank notes'.⁵²³ In its early years, the Sports Club was seen as a male preserve and remained so in the immediate aftermath of the war, despite a significant influx of female staff after 1914; it was not until 1921 that a separate Women's Sports Club was formed. Though the Sports Club was of relatively recent origin it quickly aligned itself with the Bank's traditions. Teams representing the Bank were referred to by insiders as 'House' teams, some arguing that the term originated from the old practice of bankers shouting 'House' as a way of concluding business in the City. It has also been claimed, however, that it was used primarily because it implied familiarity and loyalty to the Bank of England as an institution, similar to the attitude that a public schoolboy might develop for his school 'house'.⁵²⁴

If membership of the Sports Club was a reliable indicator of an employees' attitudes to 'The House', it seems that the Bank's management had good reason to feel that the capital invested in the site at Roehampton had been put to good use. Membership of the Sports Club more than doubled between 1918 and 1921, rising from 400 to around 900, the increase incorporating male employees returning from war service and the new post-war intake. A note written by one Bank employee in 1918 provides an insight into the type of man that was to play a significant role in the club's future –

The large extension of the Bank's functions during the 1914-18 War necessitated a heavy recruiting programme as soon as the war was over. A high standard was set for candidates – mainly men between the ages of 18-26 – and the existence

⁵²³ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 14.

⁵²⁴ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 2; T. Collins, *A Social History of English Rugby Union* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 109.

of such excellent sports facilities at Roehampton played a great part in attracting these young men, largely with a Public School background and enthusiasm for Sport.⁵²⁵

This supplies a clear indication of the kind of young men that the Bank of England tended to recruit, later described in rather scathing terms by Reay Geddes, after a short spell at Threadneedle Street, as having ‘no experience other than that of school and holidays’, and – he might have added – sport.⁵²⁶ Such young men provided the backbone of House sports teams in the interwar period. Of equal interest is the idea that the Bank’s excellent sports facilities represented a significant attraction for potential recruits. Helen Jones, in relation to industrial welfare schemes in the interwar years, has argued that factory workers were more likely to be impressed by the provision of canteens and other basic amenities than by ‘plush recreational facilities’.⁵²⁷ It seems probable that an ex-public schoolboy at the Bank of England may have looked at the world rather differently and would have been impressed by ‘a club that could boast a pitch that was, it was claimed, second only to that at Twickenham’.⁵²⁸

In *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*, as in the magazines issued by Raleigh and Robinsons, sport and other staff recreational activities featured prominently. Its first issue, in 1921, highlighted association football, athletics, rugby union, golf, tennis and swimming. The principal focus, however, was on a forthcoming athletics meeting, the first since 1911.

⁵²⁵ Quoted in Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 33.

⁵²⁶ See Kynaston, *City of London*, vol. 3, pp. 277-78.

⁵²⁷ H. Jones, ‘Employers’ Welfare Schemes and Industrial Relations in Interwar Britain’, *Business History*, 25 (4), 1983, 72.

⁵²⁸ Collins, *English Rugby Union*, p. 109.

Individual events were combined with inter-office team competitions, but in contrast to sports days at Raleigh and Robinsons, entrants had to pay to enter the various competitions – 2s for one event, 5s for three, and 7s 6d to enter more than three.⁵²⁹ Paying to play was very much a mark of the ‘true-blue’ middle-class amateur sportsman and it seems likely that the competitors at the House Sports Day would have identified themselves as such and paid up cheerfully. A year later, the event was repeated with the added attraction of an Inter-Banks Invitation relay race.⁵³⁰ There was already, as we shall see, a well-established tradition of sporting competition between the staff at the various London banks. The emphasis on athletics in the first issue of *The Old Lady* may simply be an indication of what was considered topical. It is possible, however, that it may have reflected a bias towards those amateur sports favoured by the middle class. Ross McKibbin has convincingly argued that by 1918 ‘athletics had become a sport very much of the older universities, the public schools, and the South-East of the country’; it was ‘biased very much by class and region’.⁵³¹ Later, in 1926, the club’s relationship with amateur athletics was celebrated when Olympic hero Harold Abrahams, educated at Bedford School and Cambridge University, visited Roehampton, offering advice and instruction to the Bank’s leading sprinter of the day.⁵³²

A snapshot of sporting activity at the Men’s Bank of England Sports Club c.1921-22 (see Table on p.208) does suggest that sports classified by McKibbin as ‘sectarian’ - of which amateur athletics was one – were well represented. It is significant that the club was able to field four rugby union teams. ‘It is generally accepted’, as Tony Collins has observed, ‘that

⁵²⁹ BoE, *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street* [hereafter *The Old Lady*], March 1921, p. 29.

⁵³⁰ *The Times*, 1 May, 1922, p.7.

⁵³¹ R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* ((Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 358.

⁵³² Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 73.

English rugby union is largely a “middle-class game”. Clubs at the London banks, he argues, ‘were a vehicle for the expression of corporate pride and social solidarity’.⁵³³ Hockey, also well supported by Bank employees, was another game enjoying predominantly middle-class support; it was said to offer ‘a certain cachet of social distinction’.⁵³⁴ That golf, lawn tennis, squash rackets and, especially, Rugby fives were on offer points in the same direction. Moreover, as members of a club affiliated to the London Banks Football Association and the Amateur Football Association, the Bank’s four soccer teams would have been able to pursue the sport of their choice by playing teams drawn largely from their own social background.

What is intriguing about the table below, apart from the wide range of sports available to Bank staff, are indications of the numbers involved. The outline figures in the table do not take into consideration the casual player who might have tried a sport, dropped it after a few weeks and then tried another; neither does it give an indication of those who played more than one sport, perhaps rugby in the winter and cricket in the summer. Given that the total number of male bank staff at this point hovered around 2,300, and that Sports Club membership in 1921 stood at 900, this represents around 40 per cent of staff engaged in some way with sport. However, a degree of caution should be adopted here with these figures as sports club membership may not have always indicated active participation, some members merely enjoyed the ‘social side’ of club life.

⁵³³ Collins, *English Rugby Union*, pp. 98, 108.

⁵³⁴ J. Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 86.

1:1: Activities at the Men's Bank of England Sports Club, c.1921-22

Sports Team or Club	Number of Teams/Members
Association Football	Four Teams
Athletics and Cross Country	Approx: 20-30
Billiards	Played on a casual basis. Not able to define numbers
Cricket	Four Teams
Golf	Approx: 20-30
Hockey	Four Teams
Lawn Tennis	Two Six Member Teams
Rifle Club	Approx: 20-30
Rugby Union	Four Teams
Rugby Fives	Numbers not available
Squash Rackets	As above
Swimming Club	As above

Sources: *The Old Lady*; *Britannia Quarterly*; A.J.N. Bond and M.O.H. Doughty, *The House: a History of the Bank of England Sports Club 1908-1983* (London: The Bank of England, 1984)

The English were noted for their enthusiasm for sport in the interwar years; foreigners sometimes thought that their obsession with sport was comical, but it was taken

very seriously.⁵³⁵ According to Matthew Taylor's extensive study, an estimated 750,000 recreational footballers were playing every winter Saturday afternoon in England by 1937.⁵³⁶ The attractions of the Bank of England Sports Club have to be seen in this context. The enthusiasm of workers in the financial services sector centred on the City of London was demonstrated by participation in, for example, the London Banks Football League and Challenge Cup competitions and the Inter-Bank Athletics Championship.⁵³⁷ Much of this activity took place under the supervision of the London Business Houses Amateur Sports Association which, by 1934, could boast a membership of around 256 firms catering for some 10,000 employees. A speech by the Association's vice-president, Mr. W. J. Pepper, provided an insight into why employers were so happy to encourage their employees to take an active part in sport.

Plenty of exercise, such as running, tennis, football and swimming, is the means of making employers and employees fit. When a person is fit and well he is a happy chap – the sort of man who creates happiness in the home and factory. A “dismal Jimmy” has just the reverse effect. He has, so he says, nothing to live for ... but the other chap is never “fed up”. He is used to reverses on the field of sport ...’⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ M. Pugh, *We Danced all Night: A Social History of Britain between the Wars*, (London: Vintage Books, 2008), p. 283.

⁵³⁶ M. Taylor, *The Association Game: A History of British Football*, (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), pp. 123-26.

⁵³⁷ Heller, ‘London Clerks’, 588-89.

⁵³⁸ *London Amateur Football Journal*, 15 September 1934, pp. 5-6. My thanks to Professor Dilwyn Porter for this reference.

Sports, especially team sports, were evidently well supported by London's white-collar workers and their employers generally approved. For example, as Heller had observed, 'sport and the development of team spirit was seen as central requirement for the organization'.⁵³⁹

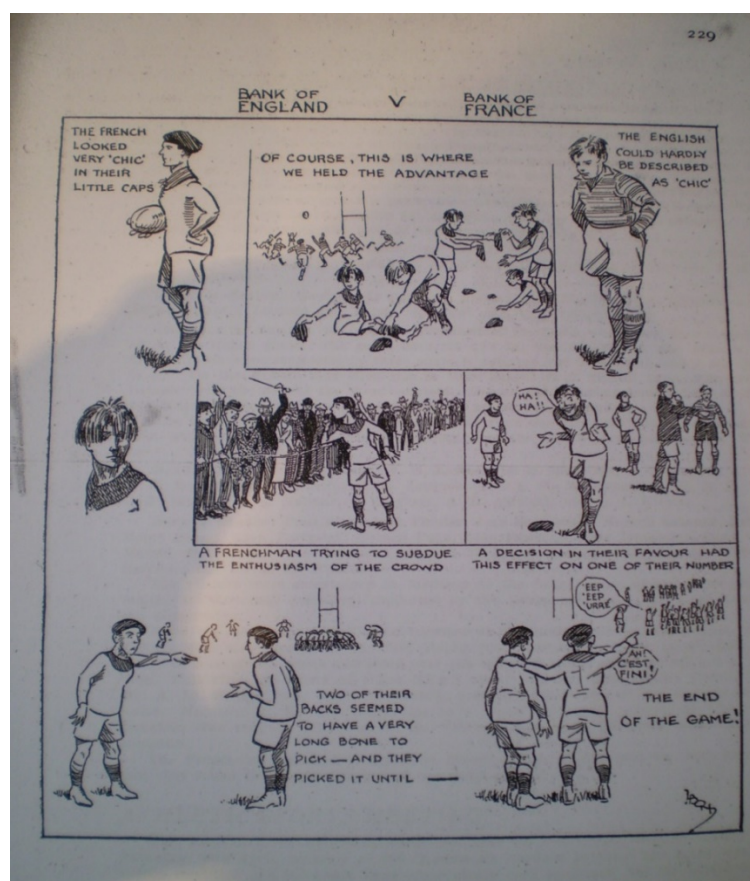
Heller has also noted that sport enabled businesses to make connections with other firms and this has already been noted in relation to Raleigh and Robinsons. The rather unique position of the Bank of England meant that it could be more ambitious in this respect, travelling to Paris, as early as February 1921 to play football and rugby against teams from L'Union Sportive de la Banque de France and winning both matches against their counterparts from France's central bank.⁵⁴⁰ It seems that British employers were not alone in assigning sport a role in industrial welfare. The Bank of France's hospitality was reciprocated in March 1922 when their teams travelled to London, the Bank of England again emerging victorious, although reports in the house magazine were quick to note that the French were improving. They also commiserated with the French who had experienced an uncomfortable journey home, the English Channel being in 'one of her worst moods'.⁵⁴¹ The occasion was celebrated by a cartoon in *The Old Lady* which, unsurprisingly for the period, made much of national stereotypes; French chic and vanity had lost out to more solid English virtues (see p.211). These Anglo-French encounters continued for a few years, with cross-country running added in 1924, an event at which the Banque excelled, having three Olympic runners in their team, but there were no cross-channel sports after 1926. Bond and Doughty conjecture that the significant expense involved was no longer justifiable

⁵³⁹ Heller, 'London Clerks', 593.

⁵⁴⁰ *The Old Lady*, June 1921, p.70, author's personal collection.

⁵⁴¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1922, p.230.

in an era of financial stringency.⁵⁴² It is also possible that inter-bank politics played a part. The event's demise coincided with a particularly difficult period in the relationship between the two central banks following Britain's decision to return to the gold standard in 1925. Informed opinion in London, according to financial journalist Paul Einzig, believed that the Bank of France at this time engaged in 'deliberate sabotage', using gold transactions to undermine the value of the pound and put the British government under pressure. It may have been difficult to justify football, rugby and cross-country in these circumstances.⁵⁴³



3:1: Bank of England versus Bank of France, Rugby Union 1922.

Source: BoE, *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*, June 1922.

⁵⁴² Bond and Doughty, *The House*, pp. 51-52.

⁵⁴³ P. Einzig, *In the Centre of Things* (London: Hutchinson, 1960), pp. 128-29. My thanks to Professor Dilwyn

Porter for this reference.

As we have seen with Raleigh and Robinsons, sport often provided opportunities for a company to make a good impression. Sporting events were often used, for example, as an occasion to raise money for charities and teams from the Bank of England Sports Club were drawn into this kind of activity. In 1921, for example, The First XV played a rugby match against their counterparts from Lloyds bank in aid of the Putney Hospital and St Dunstan's.⁵⁴⁴ This was excellent in terms of public relations, Putney Hospital being a local 'good cause' for a club based in Roehampton and St Dunstan's work for the war blind making it one of the most prominent and well-known charities of the period. Charity Cup competitions were commonplace events, especially in football, and there was much to be gained all round from taking part, as when Britannia, a team from the printing works, found themselves playing the Bayard Press in the final of the Printers' Football Charity Cup in 1923, an event celebrated by a cartoon strip illustrating the highlights of the match in the works magazine.⁵⁴⁵ There were, however, other ways in which the Bank could use its Sports Club to make a good impression, for example, by making its excellent sports facilities, such as its five's court, available for the Varsity Rugby fives match and the annual Public Schools open tournament.⁵⁴⁶ Given the rather limited social group from which the bank recruited most of its school-leavers there were clear advantages for the Bank in advertising what it could offer at Roehampton. The annual cricket match between the Governor's XI and the Bank's First XI, played at the annual garden party, was also designed to impress. *The Old Lady* was duly won over, reporting in 1930 that the Governor's XI without exaggeration 'could quite easily have represented the "Gentlemen" in the annual match with the "Players"'. Images of sartorially

⁵⁴⁴ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1921, p. 73.

⁵⁴⁵ BoE, PWI/3, *Britannia Quarterly*, May 1923, p. 190.

⁵⁴⁶ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1930, p. 62.

elegant Bank cricketers in striped blazers, caps and cravats, with names such as ‘Stairs’ Bannister, ‘Curly’ Kendall and ‘Pitters’ Pitman invoke the atmosphere of an elite gentlemen’s club rather than a works cricket team.⁵⁴⁷ No doubt the Governor’s guests were impressed and for any staff present awareness of the social hierarchy at the Bank was effectively reinforced by a display of sporting and social elitism.

Though the emphasis at the men’s club seems to have been very much on team sports some others stand out as having been important. The Swimming Club and the Rifle Club both offered an opportunity to take part as an individual and, in both cases, activities were located away from the Sports Club headquarters at Roehampton. Swimming at the St George’s Baths, Victoria, had been a Sports Club activity since before the First World War. As at Raleigh, the Swimming Club offered opportunities to learn to swim as well as to swim competitively, for both sexes. In the mid-1920s there were two swimming nights weekly with one devoted to ‘instruction’ under the guidance of Professor S. Brickett, almost certainly related to Walter Brickett, the eminent swimming ‘professor’ who had trained the British team at the 1908 and 1912 Olympic Games.⁵⁴⁸ Competitive swimmers were well catered for; in addition to inter-office contests, the men’s team were members of the Senior Division of the London Banks Amateur Swimming Association and, a little later, joined the London Banks Water Polo League. Seven Bank of England swimmers entered the London Banks one-mile championship in 1930, but were disadvantaged because they were unfamiliar with the course, on open water in the River Thames between Chiswick Church and Hammersmith Bridge. Although some difficulties were encountered from time to time

⁵⁴⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, September 1930, pp. 131-132; Bond and Doughty, *The House*, pp. 66-69.

⁵⁴⁸ D. Day, ‘London Swimming Professors: Victorian Craftsmen and Aquatic Entrepreneurs’, *Sport in History*, 30 (1), (2010), 45-46.

on account of St George's Baths being open to the public and therefore not always available for club use, the annual gala in 1930 was considered the most ambitious yet in terms of the number of events arranged.⁵⁴⁹ The Bank's printers were also active in the pool and were able to hold a well-supported gala, with around 500 spectators giving 'continuous vocal support', at the Pitfield Street Baths. Perhaps it was in recognition of this enthusiasm that this event was reported in *The Old Lady*, as the club had been disappointed that the attendance at the gala held at St George's had been disappointing.⁵⁵⁰

The Rifle Club also seems to have prospered in the interwar period reflecting the general popularity of rifle-shooting in the City of London, perhaps it was a way of continuing an activity first encountered at the Officer Training Corps to which many middle-class men would have been exposed in their schooldays. Rifle shooting was sufficiently popular among employees in the financial sector to support a London Clearing Banks League of sixteen teams which provided the Bank of England's 'A' and 'B' teams with the opportunities to compete against the likes of Coutts, Lloyds, Westminster, Midland and the National Provincial Bank.⁵⁵¹ There was also a Rifle Club competing in the Printers' Summer League Second Division against teams from Amalgamated Press and W.H. Smith which indicates that this was a sport characterised by social segregation.⁵⁵² This impression is reinforced by section reports in *The Old Lady* in 1930 which revealed concern at the lack of younger members, although it was hoped that a forthcoming event at Bisley - a social as well as a sporting occasion - might induce greater enthusiasm. At the same time the club secretary

⁵⁴⁹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, September 1926, p. 330, December 1930, pp. 209-210.

⁵⁵⁰ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1930, p213.

⁵⁵¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, pp. 67-68.

⁵⁵² BoE, PWI/5, *Britannia Quarterly*, November 1925, p. 168.

conceded that full range-shooting was expensive and that the committee was considering a scheme which would enable members to buy their ammunition at a reduced rate.⁵⁵³ Comparison can be made here with Robinsons Rifle Club that struggled for membership owing to the expense of rifles and ammunition.

However, it does seem that the Bank's management were particularly impressed by enthusiasm for shooting and what it represented. There was a strong militarist sentiment that pervaded much of British society, including the workplace, in the first half of the twentieth century and this seems to have been the case at the Bank. As late as 1955, when Barry Hoffman was interviewed, service in the school cadet corps and recent promotion to the rank of sergeant was instrumental in him being offered the job.⁵⁵⁴ It is significant that it was possible to swim or shoot either as an individual or as a member of a team representing the Bank of England. In the Army the role of sport in encouraging the required *esprit de section* and *esprit de platoon* had long been recognised.⁵⁵⁵ These lessons had been absorbed by the management of the Bank and were often evident in the house magazine where there was a particular emphasis on the importance of good will and teamwork. For instance, the water polo section in 1929 talked about recognising teamwork as an essential part of the

⁵⁵³ BoE, *The Old Lady*, September 1930, pp.127.

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with Barry Hoffmann, 1 November 2011. Barry joined the bank in September 1955 and was an active member of the sports club throughout his time of employment. He became Assistant Secretary to the club in 1970.

⁵⁵⁵ J. Roberts, "'The Best Football Team, The Best Platoon': The Role of Football in the Proletarianization of the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-19", *Sport in History*, 26, (1), 37.

clubs success whilst the secretary's report praised the considerable 'good will shown' through its various 'Officials and Principals'.⁵⁵⁶

Sport at the Bank of England appears to have flourished in the 1930s; towards the end of the decade, according to Bond and Doughty, 'practically every section of the Men's and Women's Sports Clubs [were] at a peak'.⁵⁵⁷ Speaking at the Club's general meeting in 1939, the Bank's Governor, Sir Montagu Norman, was pleased to observe that the sports sections appeared to be expanding but also noted that the sales figures for food sold at Roehampton were at a record level, indicating that the Sports Club was fulfilling a wider social function for many employees. This suggests that sport at the Bank of England, as in the manufacturing sector, could provide an important focus for employees' social life as well as helping to make them feel that they belonged to a community of some kind. Club representatives, in turn, thanked the Governor and the Court of Directors for their 'unfailing generosity', echoing numerous speeches over the years at Raleigh, Robinsons and elsewhere. Towards the end of his speech Norman reflected on conscription and the expansion of the Territorial Army, and hoped that the threat of war would soon recede.⁵⁵⁸ Within a few months these hopes had been dashed but, at least, the Sports Club had built a strong platform, sufficient to ensure that it could survive the difficulties encountered in the six years of war that followed.

Though there was a public debate about whether or not it was appropriate for sport to continue while the war was on it tended to be spectator sports – particularly football and

⁵⁵⁶ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, p.67 & *The Old Lady*, June 1930, p.58.

⁵⁵⁷ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 135.

⁵⁵⁸ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1939, p. 95.

greyhound racing – that attracted most criticism. Active participation in sport was, however, looked at positively by the military as a way of keeping men fit, alleviating boredom, sustaining morale and encouraging *esprit de corps*.⁵⁵⁹ When, in 1942, after initial restrictions imposed on sport had been relaxed, it was suggested that they should be tightened again, most MP's, 'backed the Government line that, on the whole sport was valuable – even spectator sport – because it helped to sustain popular morale'.⁵⁶⁰ That said, conditions confronting those who sought to maintain a programme of sports activity at the Bank of England were very difficult, not least because the threat of air raids necessitated the transfer of a number of departments to Hurstbourne in Hampshire.⁵⁶¹ What became known as Hurstbourne Camp consisted of 16 hastily erected sleeping huts and a large office block of some 50,000 square feet designed mainly to accommodate the 490 men and 138 women needed to run the Accountant's department.⁵⁶² What is interesting here is the way in which the exiled employees quickly organised their own entertainments; intra-bank competition was now organised to some extent on Hurstbourne versus Roehampton lines, an indication that the employees at the camp were using sport as a way of embracing their new location while maintaining some kind of continuity with their pre-war social lives. Sports and games helped to make life at Hurstbourne bearable, even enjoyable. The final of the Hurstbourne Darts Cup in 1943, held in the camp canteen, saw Hut 22 defeat Hut 7, but also provided a

⁵⁵⁹ T. Mason and E. Riedi, *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 196.

⁵⁶⁰ R. Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 119.

⁵⁶¹ R. S. Sayers, *The Bank of England 1891-1944*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 576.

⁵⁶² Hennessy, *A Domestic History*, p. 8.

pretext for a sociable evening which ended with a midnight march; a 'Prisoner of War' tournament organised by the table tennis section, attracted an entry of over 200 (men and women).⁵⁶³ Spontaneous improvisation was the order of the day and some sporting activities served this purpose well, helping workers to fill their spare time and to alleviate boredom.

At Roehampton sport continued but in a sporadic fashion. It did not help that so many men were serving in the forces or had been moved to Hurstbourne. There were other problems arising specifically from the war. In November 1940 the Men's Clubhouse was destroyed by eleven incendiary bombs, whilst Barnes Council forced the surrender of two hockey pitches which were turned into allotments.⁵⁶⁴ However, some sport continued with some members pronouncing 'war or no war, some form of exercise was essential'. After a few months disruption at the start of the war football recommenced with matches against an old Boys club on Sunday afternoons; the hard tennis courts had been kept in good condition and remained in use.⁵⁶⁵ However, the absence of club members remained a major problem throughout the war. By June 1943 the Sports Club report could only lament that it had not been possible to raise enough players to make up a rugby team, or even a soccer team, for the season that had passed, though an eleven had been raised at Hurstbourne and played 22 matches. It was some consolation, perhaps, that the Tennis Club had organised a tournament in aid of the Staff Prisoners of War Fund.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1943, p. 75.

⁵⁶⁴ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, pp. 137-139.

⁵⁶⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1939, p. 344.

⁵⁶⁶ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1943, p. 76.

The Men's Sports Club, c.1945-c.1970

The arrival of the first majority Labour government, elected by a 'landslide' in 1945, ushered in a turning point in the history of the Bank of England. The Manifesto on which Labour had fought the General Election had contained the sentence: 'The Bank of England with its financial powers must be brought under public ownership'. The Bank of England Act (1946) followed and the Bank was nationalised.⁵⁶⁷ Bringing it into public ownership, however, had little effect on either administration or internal organisation.⁵⁶⁸ At the highest levels of the Bank's social hierarchy some traces of the old patrician style lasted through to the 1950s. Barry Hoffman, who started at the Bank in 1955, recalled one 'old boy' who would take himself off to watch cricket – 'this is no good we'd be better off at the Oval' – when problems arose; another, who had not made much progress in his career, would get his butler to phone in with the message, 'Mr will not be attending today'. There may have been (at least until 1951) a reforming Labour government in office but it made little impression on the internal operations of the Bank, an institution which was 'conservative with a capital C'.⁵⁶⁹

Arthur Marwick's influential work on post-war Britain observed that the immediate aftermath of the war witnessed a resurgence of leisure activities characteristic of the interwar period.⁵⁷⁰ Many people just wanted to get back to normal after the war had disrupted their lives and picking up pre-war sporting and recreational interest was part of

⁵⁶⁷ J. Fforde, *The Bank of England and Public Policy 1941-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 4-5.

⁵⁶⁸ Hennessy, *A Domestic History*, p. 63.

⁵⁶⁹ Barry Hoffman interview.

⁵⁷⁰ A. Marwick, *British Society since 1945*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 71.

that process. For employees at the Bank of England this may have been easier to achieve than for most. The facilities at Roehampton were quickly restored to pre-war standards; ground staff had produced what many considered the finest playing surface in the country for use of the Bank of England's First XI footballers.⁵⁷¹ Though the total number of employees fell back from the wartime peak of 6,285 in 1941 to 5,080 in 1946, this was still higher than in the late 1930s, suggesting that there would be no shortage of active sportsmen and women.⁵⁷² Yet membership of the Men's Sports Club appears to have picked up relatively slowly after the war with only 258 playing and 555 non-playing members by 1947.⁵⁷³ A few months earlier, the club's honorary secretary had indicated clearly in notes supplied to *The Old Lady* that there was some way to go before pre-war normality was restored.

On the day when all representative sides are successful, when the rising attendances fail to cause congestion, when hot water is plentiful, when the beer lasts out until closing time ... then shall the old colours break from a new flagstaff and proclaim that the Club has come into its own again.⁵⁷⁴

Austerity conditions caused some problems, as the honorary secretary acknowledged, and continued to do so for a few years after the war. London had been bombed heavily and

⁵⁷¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1946, p. 209.

⁵⁷² E. Hennessy., 'The Governors, Directors and Management of the Bank of England' in R. Roberts and D. Kynaston, (eds), *The Bank of England: Money, Power and Influence, 1694 – 1994* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 203.

⁵⁷³ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 153.

⁵⁷⁴ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1946, p. 209.

there was a post-war housing shortage; this meant that Bank of England employees tended to live further away from their work than had been the case in the 1930s and, even if they lived near Roehampton, employees returning from war service in their twenties and thirties often made home and family their priorities rather than the Bank of England Sports Club.⁵⁷⁵

Sports club activity gradually gathered pace again and appears to have been restored to pre-war levels by the mid 1950s. In 1950 the table tennis section, for both sexes, reported growing support and 'greater keenness than ever'. New members could join for 2s 6d. It was important, perhaps that table tennis could be played at the Bank itself and did not involve a trip to Roehampton; the summer season was due to open in May using the lecture theatre at Threadneedle Street. Table tennis was also reported to be popular at some regional branches of the Bank.⁵⁷⁶ However, it is clear that the popularity of particular sports tended to fluctuate. By 1958, even though the men's first team were top of Division One in the London Banks League, membership of the table tennis section had fallen and for the second year running poor entry in the handicap tournament had forced the cancellation of the doubles event.⁵⁷⁷ In general, however, the range of Sports Club activities on offer in the 1950s seems to have matched the range at the late 1930s peak. After joining in 1955, Barry Hoffman played football, cricket, hockey, golf, snooker, darts and skittles, the latter being played competitively after football matches. Though football may have been taken less seriously than in the interwar period – the Bank's First XI had played in the Southern Amateur League but had not rejoined after the war – skittles, at least for a while, was highly competitive. Some players, according to Hoffman, were chosen to play football on the

⁵⁷⁵ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 144.

⁵⁷⁶ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1950, pp. 382-83.

⁵⁷⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1958, p. 45.

strength of their skittles ability; 'the football skittles team remained unbeaten for some time'.⁵⁷⁸

While participation in some sports fell, in others it rose, often reflecting the changing popularity of particular sports more generally. One activity that helped to define the Bank of England Sports Club as a middle-class institution was the Equestrian Club, dating originally from the interwar period, with horses stabled at Clarence Farm, close to Roehampton.⁵⁷⁹ The club had held its first Gymkhana in 1938 but seems to have grown in the 1950s, benefiting no doubt from the reinvention of show jumping as a sport for television after Foxhunter's success at the 1952 Olympics. 'The BBC' as Holt and Mason explain, 'saw an exciting sport with a touch of class and tradition which appealed to women as well as men'.⁵⁸⁰ In 1958 the Equestrian Club entered a team for the first time at the British Horse Society Gymkhana when the Bank's Miss Dummer riding 'Handy Hunter' won the competition outright.⁵⁸¹ Though no male riders are mentioned, show jumping was a sport in which men and women could compete against each other on equal terms, and it seems unlikely that – even if women predominated – that men would have been excluded. Although we should be careful not to exaggerate the social exclusiveness of equestrianism, it was a relatively expensive sport to take up and this helped to ensure that it was usually the preserve of the relatively well-off. Unsurprisingly, no mention of similar clubs can be found in any of the manufacturing firms researched so the Bank of England is unusual in this

⁵⁷⁸ Barry Hoffmann interview; N. Ackland, 'The Amateur Football Alliance', in A.H. Fabian and G. Green (eds), *Association Football* (London, Caxton, 1960), vol.1, p. 370.

⁵⁷⁹ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p.132.

⁵⁸⁰ R. Holt and T. Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.98.

⁵⁸¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1958, p. 247.

respect. Barry Hoffman conceded that the ambiance of the Sports Club during the 1950s and 1960s, the skittles and the table tennis notwithstanding, resembled many golf clubs of the period and was predominantly middle-class.⁵⁸² That equestrianism was on offer would simply have underlined this characteristic.

As Hoffman recalled the Bank of England was ‘a very benign institution’ throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The facilities for sport at large manufacturing companies like Raleigh, for example, were often of a very high standard. The facilities made available to Bank of England employees at Roehampton were at the top of the range, so good that the cricket pitch was often used by Surrey County Cricket Club for Second XI fixtures and the training facilities by Chelsea and Fulham Football Clubs. The England squad used Roehampton as their training base for the 1966 World Cup competition; some Sports Club members went to the final ‘after Alf Ramsey had ‘sent down one or two’ tickets.’⁵⁸³ Funding and maintaining facilities of this quality over a long period testified to the importance that the Bank’s management attached to the project. It helped, Barry Hoffman believed, that so many of the Bank’s senior management had been active in the Sports Club themselves. Those wishing to start a new team or section found encouragement and support at the highest levels. In the mid-1960s, when there were concerns that the facilities at Roehampton were not being used to full capacity, the Governor gave his support to plans – instigated by senior officials – for the development of an Indoor Sports Hall and Swimming Pool Complex. These were completed in 1970 and officially opened by Leslie O’Brien, Governor of the Bank at

⁵⁸² Barry Hoffman interview.

⁵⁸³ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 223.

that time; the new Sports Hall was named The O'Brien Hall in his honour.⁵⁸⁴ With great excitement *The Old Lady* rejoiced in the prospect of the new Swimming Pool being 'a star attraction', anticipating that the wives and children of members using it would be permitted to use the facilities independently under the new category of 'Family Membership'.⁵⁸⁵ This represented a significant investment in providing a high-profile non-wage benefit for employees as well as a continuing commitment to the Bank's own version of industrial welfare. Hoffman, an active officer of the Sports Club was in no doubt that such initiatives 'absolutely fostered better working relations and better morale', and possibly aided recruitment.⁵⁸⁶

One reviewer writing in *The Old Lady* in the 1970s described the social ambience of the Bank of England Sports Club as akin to 'a small exclusive country club where everybody knew everybody else'.⁵⁸⁷ It was important to offer a sense of exclusivity when competing in the leisure market against the new wave of local authority operated sports centres which redefined the leisure landscape in the 1970s. Unlike manufacturing companies, the Bank were never interested in the prestige that came from sporting success; 'outsiders' were rarely invited to play for Bank teams and, though sporting prowess might well impress an interviewing panel, jobs were not offered in order to strengthen Bank representative teams. The Bank, though committed to sport was inward-looking, it was prepared to innovate, as with the new sports hall and swimming pool in 1970, but remained essentially conservative, as it began to contemplate the formal amalgamation of the Men's and Women's Sports

⁵⁸⁴ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, pp. 279-82.

⁵⁸⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1970, p. 66.

⁵⁸⁶ Barry Hoffman interview.

⁵⁸⁷ BoE, E8/231, *The Old Lady*, June 1978, p. 75.

Clubs in the 1960s. The previous fifty years or so had witnessed the continued presence of sports sections which by 1970 had changed very little from 1918. Some sections, football for example, now had six teams which included a Strollers XI, a team of veterans whose latest victory had been against the Bank of England Printing Works; cricket remained popular, still fielding four teams including a sociable Sunday 'A' XI.⁵⁸⁸ The intake might now include more ex-grammar school boys, but it was still recognisably the same institution as fifty years earlier.

The Women's Sports Club, 1921-c.1945

In the summer of 1919 women employed at the Bank of England, stood at 2,450, some in established, some in non-established posts. What followed was, at first, a fall in the number, of women employed as the Bank adjusted from wartime to peacetime conditions; 1,700 women were employed by 1921 and only 1,200 by 1926, though thereafter numbers rose again to reach 1,700 again by the end of the 1930s. Particular employment conditions applied to women only. Young women seeking employment at the Bank had to be between 18 and 21 years of age and could only be considered if they had been nominated by a member of the Court, i.e. one of the directors. They were then subject to the marriage bar and the additional indignity of compulsory retirement on reaching the age of fifty.⁵⁸⁹ Thus, though subsequent developments, not least the Second World War, led to a relaxation of these rules in the 1940s and 1950s – the Civil Service marriage bar was abolished for new employees in 1946 - the employment regime at the Bank openly discriminated against

⁵⁸⁸ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1971, p. 64.

⁵⁸⁹ Sayers, *The Bank of England*, pp. 616-17. For the marriage bar generally see S. D'Cruze, 'Women and the family', in J. Purvis, (ed) *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*, (London: UCL Press, 1995), p. 74.

women for much of the period under consideration, though it was no by no means unusual in this respect. For many women in the 1920s and 1930s, of course, marriage was not a viable option owing to a reduction in the number of potential male partners as a consequence of the high casualty rate during the First World War. Many women, as Virginia Nicholson has intelligently argued, were forced to acknowledge that they were part of a demographic crisis and that many of them were unlikely to find husbands.⁵⁹⁰ Arguably, work and work-related social life may have been especially important for this group. However, although there were significant fluctuations – downwards in the early 1920s and sharply upwards during the Second World War, the overall trend in women's employment was upwards. In 1921, 8 per cent of women working in England were employed as clerks and typists, rising to 20 per cent by 1951. In the inter-war period, Jane Lewis makes the important point, that the number of women clerks in government offices increased and, in parallel, the recruitment of lower middle-class girls became more important.⁵⁹¹ As the Bank of England broadly followed national trends this may well have considerable bearing on the type of female employed and, in turn, it seems likely that this would have shaped the nature of sports and social provision for women at Threadneedle Street and Roehampton.

Though women were employed at the Bank of England from 1894 – when two 'graduates' were appointed – numbers had grown to 64 by 1914, there is no evidence to suggest that they took part in any sporting activities.⁵⁹² In 1908 when the (Men's) Sports

⁵⁹⁰ V. Nicholson, *Singled Out: How Two Million Women Survived without Men after the First World War*, (London: Penguin Books, 2008), p.82.

⁵⁹¹ J. Lewis, *Women in England: 1870-1950*, (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), pp. 156-158.

⁵⁹² *Women in the Bank*, p. 6. In the 1890s, at Oxford and Cambridge, women could take the same examinations as men but were not awarded degrees.

Club was founded 'no thought was given ... to the recreation of its women clerks'. The increase in female staff during and just after the First World War, however, undoubtedly elevated the profile and expectations of women and, by 1920, a Women's Club had been formed. For a subscription of two shillings girls could play netball and hockey or swim, however, there was no home ground – the facilities at Roehampton being reserved for men's activities - and pitches and courts had to be hired from neighbouring clubs.⁵⁹³ Lack of suitable facilities for women's sport often held development back at this time and this aspect of 'The Leisure Problem' had been among those highlighted by the Social Institutes' Union for Women and Girls in 1919.⁵⁹⁴

This problem was resolved relatively quickly at the Bank of England when it was agreed in 1921 to provide the ladies with a club house, a hockey field and tennis courts at Roehampton. On the 12 July, a 'Provisional General Management Committee' drew up the Women's Club's first set of rules and regulations. It seems likely that the Governor and Court of the Bank were responding to an initiative that came from women employees themselves here, responding to enthusiastic middle-class girls with an enhanced sense of their own identity and as keen to pursue their sporting interests as their male colleagues. Michael Heller has convincingly argued that a model of staff initiation and management support 'became the norm in British bureaucracies and became embedded in its organizational culture'.⁵⁹⁵ A similar process was evident in industry where, as Fiona Skillen has argued in relation to interwar Scotland, 'employers were often influenced in their choice

⁵⁹³ BoEA, *The Old Lady*, December 1970, p.223.

⁵⁹⁴ *The Times*, 19 March, 1919; see also C. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 82.

⁵⁹⁵ Heller, 'London Clerks', 582.

of provision by requests made from workers'.⁵⁹⁶ There were, nevertheless, some limits and the Bank made it clear that the estimated £250-350 required annually for running costs should be raised by club members.⁵⁹⁷

Total membership, playing and non-playing, was around 100 in 1921, rising to 300 in 1931, 400 in 1935 and over 750 in 1949. Hockey, netball, tennis and swimming were part of the Women's Club from the start; by 1931 it could boast four hockey, three tennis, two netball and two running teams alongside a newly formed gymnastic section. Card games were introduced at some point in the 1920s, though a special vote was required as some members thought this activity might lower the tone of the club.⁵⁹⁸ This pointed to the importance of social interaction at the club. Taking 'tea' at the clubhouse was an aspect of Sports Club life at the Bank of England that hinted at its middle-class ambience; no doubt tea was served and consumed at both Raleigh and Robinsons, but the works canteen was a more functional, less genteel setting. 'Teas' were clearly important at Roehampton. A club 'stewardess', Mrs Bynorth, was appointed to 'provided the tea' for members. The honorary general secretary reported gratefully in 1930 that new members of clubhouse staff 'have fallen in with arrangements exceedingly well ... particularly in regard to the service of teas at week-ends'.⁵⁹⁹

Reports supplied by club officials to *The Old Lady* indicate strained relationships within the membership at times. These had been sufficiently serious in 1930 to prompt

⁵⁹⁶ F. Skillen, 'When women look their worst': Women and Sports Participation in interwar Scotland, (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, July 2008), p. 136.

⁵⁹⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1970, p. 224.

⁵⁹⁸ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1970, pp. 223-24, and Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 129.

⁵⁹⁹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, p. 60.

some resignations and allegations that the club was unfriendly, especially towards newcomers in relatively isolated positions.

I think, perhaps, it is putting the case rather strongly to say that there is a lack of friendliness in the club, but everyone might make an effort to look after those who, being in small offices, find it difficult to get in touch with fellow members. At the same time these unfortunates can do a great deal more than they do at present to help themselves.

The brusque tone of this response suggests that the club's critics might have had a case but the context is probably significant. With numbers of potential members rising as numbers of female staff expanded it is possible that long-established members might have been reluctant to welcome those not familiar with the club's cosy conventions. The lawn tennis section responded more positively to this situation. It was planning Saturday afternoon tournaments whereby staff could come along, meet new members, form new sets and promote a more welcoming environment.⁶⁰⁰ It is important not to exaggerate the significance of this episode – most clubs have members who are more (or less) friendly than others – and this was as likely to be the case at Raleigh or Robinsons as at the Bank of England. Moreover, the topic is not mentioned again in *The Old Lady*. The episode does remind us, however, that the best efforts by management to use sport and other recreational activities to promote *esprit de corps* could sometimes be undermined.

Unsurprisingly, the emphasis in the Bank's corporate literature is positive, much of it simply recording the sporting achievements of the club, its various sections and their members. The women's hockey First XI won the United Banks Cup in 1930 as well as performing with distinction at the Bournemouth Women's Hockey Festival – this tour being

⁶⁰⁰ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1930, p. 69.

given special mention in *The Old Lady* – additionally, eight members of the team had attended county trials, four of which were successful.⁶⁰¹ Significantly, it seems to have taken longer for hockey to become established as a sport for women in the less rarefied – and less feminine - atmosphere of the Bank of England Printing Works. It was reported in 1931 that a Britannia Ladies Hockey Section had only just been started after a small meeting had elected a secretary and a committee of three. It was hoped that two teams would eventually take the field as practice commenced, not at Roehampton, but at a ground in Walthamstow. Section notes often supply a strong indication of the role of sports clubs in fostering a ‘family’ culture within an organisation. ‘The whole Association’, noted the *Britannia Quarterly*, ‘will wish success to this youngest daughter of Britannia, and wish her a happy and prosperous career’.⁶⁰² Such language underlined what Simon Phillips has described as the ‘maternalist ambience that characterized the welfare of female staff’ at Boots in Nottingham.⁶⁰³ The intention was that employees should bond emotionally with their place of employment, helping to create a sense of belonging which encouraged them to stay.

Along with hockey the ladies netball section was showing ‘great keenness’ as the First VII won the London Bank’s League’s Association Challenge Cup in 1930 before going on to represent the London Banks in the *Daily Mirror* Shield, a tournament organised by the London and Home Counties Netball Federation. Netball, however, was probably more important than hockey in terms of the opportunities it offered for inter-office activity. It was

⁶⁰¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1930, p. 212 and Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p. 129.

⁶⁰² BoE, PWI/9, *Britannia Quarterly*, May 1931, p. 74.

⁶⁰³ S. Phillips, ‘“Character, grit and personality”’: Continued Education, Recreation and Training at Boots Pure Drug Company 1918-45’, *History of Education*, 32, (6), (2003), 631.

reported that such a competition had ‘proved to be a tremendous success’.⁶⁰⁴ Here again similarities can be drawn with manufacturing industry as office and departmental teams offered the chance of competitive play for those girls either not committed to the demands of the works team or those not quite good enough for selection. It could also be justified in terms of encouraging teamwork and primary group loyalty. At the same time, it provided an enlarged group of female employees with relief, albeit temporarily, from the repetitive routines that characterised much clerical work at the Bank. In 1933, a factory inspector had observed that a large proportion of the 1.83 million women employed in industry were engaged in repetitive work and had recommended physical recreation as a means of counteracting the effects of monotonous work and promoting mental, as well as physical, fitness.⁶⁰⁵ Women’s sport at the Bank of England could be justified in the same way.

Some new sports were taken up in the 1930s, notably rounders, which had ‘become increasingly popular lately in schools and colleges’. It was reported that Miss Wilkie, a newly-appointed lecturer at Bedford Physical Training College had offered to coach a Bank team, though there was some difficulty in recruiting the thirty members required to make the rounders section viable. Members who were contemplating giving up their membership were urged to reconsider. The section report in *The Old Lady* conceded that ‘the need for economy at the present time is fully appreciated’, but went on to argue that it is ‘only by keeping our membership up to full strength that we can justify the unfailing interest and generosity extended to us on all occasions by the Court of Directors’.⁶⁰⁶ What

⁶⁰⁴ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1930, pp. 70-71.

⁶⁰⁵ See V. Long and H. Marland, ‘From Danger and Motherhood to Health and Beauty: Health Advice for the Factory Girl in Early Twentieth-Century Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 20 (4), (2009), 466-69.

⁶⁰⁶ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1932, pp. 68-9.

this implied was a recognition that support from the Bank's management was not unconditional, especially the aftermath of the financial crisis of 1931, which had seen the Bank exert its influence to secure cuts in public spending.

It is important to note, therefore, that, far from withdrawing its support for women's sport, the Bank had committed itself even further by the late 1930s. This was especially evident at the garden party in 1937 on the occasion of the opening of the new ladies pavilion at Roehampton. Some 1,600 members and guests listened to speeches from the Governor and Mrs Norman, whilst a cricket match and the finals of the tennis tournament held further attractions. Membership at this point stood at around 450 with the new pavilion helping to boost the use of the Club by some fifty per cent. Further opportunities to play badminton and squash and to fence were in place by 1939.⁶⁰⁷ Despite these initiatives, however, an anticipated surge in playing members did not materialise, perhaps because the club had a continual battle to replace members who left the Bank's employment when they married. From the Sports Club's point of view it was unfortunate that some women, as Claire Langhamer has observed, continued to see 'husband-hunting' and marriage 'as the ultimate career'.⁶⁰⁸ The netball section in 1939 reported with regret the loss of two players, one who had been captain for the previous four years; the first team 'will miss them both very much and will regret the breaking up of a team ... who have spent many pleasant Saturday afternoons in each other's company'.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, p.1 32.

⁶⁰⁸ Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p. 115.

⁶⁰⁹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1939, p. 204.

The Second World War undoubtedly had a liberating effect on conditions for women employees at the Bank of England, even if some of the changes were only temporary. For example, the strict entry qualifications (being aged 18-21 and unmarried) were dropped, whilst clothes rationing led to a suspension of dress regulations. Moreover, jobs previously the domain of men, such as serving on 'in-tellers counters', were readily allocated to and taken up by women. In 1943 an internal report went as far as to suggest that 'it has been proved that women, even very young women, can be highly successful on work formerly done by men'.⁶¹⁰ With many staff transferred to Hurstbourne, much sport followed, leaving the well-appointed headquarters at Roehampton for the makeshift huts and the hastily marked out sports fields of rural Hampshire. Overall, however, opportunities for organised sport were curtailed and it was necessary to remind members in December 1939, that 'the Club has by no means ceased to function'.⁶¹¹ In these circumstances, much of the sport that took place among Bank employees was on an informal, *ad hoc* basis, with the men's and women's clubs combining. Much of the activity that did take place, at both Roehampton and Hurstbourne, saw men and women combine in non-contact sports such as darts and table tennis. Netball and hockey captains arranged occasional matches when enough players and opposition could be found; the annual swimming galas were abandoned owing to wartime constraints. For those women that remained at head office, cable stripping, organised by the Volunteer Munitions Brigade, left little time for sport. It was slow and laborious work but between September 1942 and June 1943 some three tons of cable had been extracted from damaged aircraft, prompting the comment that this work was 'almost as vital as

⁶¹⁰ *Women in the Bank*, pp.12-16.

⁶¹¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1939, p. 346.

munitions manufacture'.⁶¹² Perhaps the most important aspect of women's sport at the Bank in the war years, however, was that, when it did take place, it was often on an informal basis with women playing against or alongside men. In organisations where gender roles were clearly demarcated and men dominated management and executive positions, sport could help soften some of the rigid boundaries, though it is important to recognise the limits of what could be achieved in this respect. Even in the 1960s, Barry Hoffman recalled, female sports club members could not enter the men's bar after 7.00 pm, the only communication being via a serving hatch.⁶¹³

The Women's Sports Club 1945-c.1970

From 1940 onwards it was accepted at the Bank of England that women employees outnumbered men and would continue to do so. However, 25 per cent of women left the bank within five years of taking up employment, with only thirty per cent reaching pensionable age, this compared to the 99 per cent of male clerks reaching their pension.⁶¹⁴ Yet there were some noticeable improvements in employment conditions. The post-war years saw the demise of the marriage bar and enhanced opportunities for women to forge careers at the bank, especially after the recommendations suggested by Sir George Abell's Special Committee on Women's Work in 1955 which envisaged the gradual integration of male and female staff, with women able to compete for the same appointments as men,

⁶¹² BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1943, p. 71.

⁶¹³ S. Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at Boots Pure Drug Company, 1883-1945', (PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2003), p. 171. Barry Hoffmann interview.

⁶¹⁴ Hennessy, *A Domestic History*, pp. 332-34.

after they had worked at the Bank for five years.⁶¹⁵ Though the Men's and Women's Sports Clubs were not formally amalgamated until 1970, there are clear signs of sport at the Bank becoming an integrated activity long before then.

Adrian Smith has argued with some insight, when discussing the manufacturing industry in Coventry, that women were marginalised in works sport and patronised in company literature, for instance, one employee, typically, was described as a '29 years old housewife and a secretary at Baginton'.⁶¹⁶ Similar language has already been noted in the company magazines at Raleigh and Robinsons. *The Old Lady* is rather different in tone, perhaps partly because the women's sports club was a separate entity to the men's until 1970, thus women were able to write about club and section activities in their own words, even if their activities were under-represented compared to those of men. As might be expected in the house magazine of an organisation employing mainly middle-class, relatively well-educated people, the discourse, was more polite in its references to women than might have been the case at a factory employing mainly working-class women. This is not to say that the prevailing structures of gender inequality did not apply at the Bank of England; it was still a man's world but one in which women were likely to be treated better at work than they would have been in many other locations, for example, on the shop floor in the manufacturing sector.

As in the manufacturing sector the initial impetus for women's sporting activity at the Bank was driven by demand from below. Governors and management

⁶¹⁵ *Women in the Bank*, pp. 19-21.

⁶¹⁶ A. Smith, Cars, 'Cricket, and Alf Smith: The Place of Works-Based Sports and Social Clubs in the Life of Mid-Twentieth Century Coventry', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19, (1), (2002), 145.

responded positively, providing and maintaining the facilities at Roehampton. However, it was the women members themselves who ran their own club and its various sections. The Women's Sports Club offered a wide range of activities in the post-war period. A women's cricket team was founded just after the war, though absence of references to its activities in *The Old Lady* suggests that it may have been short-lived; rinks were hired for ice-skating; sections for athletics, hockey, lawn tennis, netball, squash rackets and swimming were active through to the 1970s. These activities sustained solid growth in membership as the numbers of women employed at the Bank expanded; the Women's Sports Club had 750 members by the time it merged with the Men's Club in 1970.⁶¹⁷ Aspiring sportswomen at the Bank were not short of role models, especially in the 1950s, a period in which Britain's elite women athletes tended to outperform their male counterparts, even though Roger Bannister, Chris Chataway, and Gordon Pirie stole the headlines. In the four Olympic Games held between 1948 and 1960 female competitors comprised only 15 per cent of the British team but won thirty per cent of the medals.⁶¹⁸ Having taken the Hurstbourne Cup at the Bank's Sports Day in 1951 Shirley Cawley was in the British team at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, winning a bronze medal in the long jump. Ann Long, a diver, represented Great Britain in the 1956 (Melbourne) and 1960 (Rome) Olympics; she was 'our most famous water baby', according to the in-house history of the Bank of England Sports Club. There is no doubt that the Bank valued having these high-profile athletes on the staff. Long, already an international competitor when she started work at the Bank, later recalled: 'When I got the job I was called up to see some of the governors because they were interested in my

⁶¹⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1970, p. 226.

⁶¹⁸ J. Kay, 'A Window of Opportunity? Preliminary Thoughts on Women's Sport in Post-war Britain', *Sport in History*, 30, (2), (2010), 198.

international diving medals and to hear about the Olympics'.⁶¹⁹ Significantly, both Cawley (Croydon Harriers) and Long (Ilford Diving Club) were primarily associated with clubs away from their place of work, though Cawley certainly competed in Bank Sports Club events. It seems likely that in many respects they were typical of the female clerical staff employed at the Bank, both commuting from the suburbs, but neither of them especially reliant on the facilities that the Bank provided at Roehampton or elsewhere.

There was a tradition of co-operation between the Men's and Women's Sports Clubs that preceded amalgamation and may to some extent have paved the way for it in the 1950s and 1960s. Mixed sports activities were a feature at Roehampton and lawn tennis, for example, was organised by a combined men's and women's section from just after the war. As illustration 3.2 indicates some track events on Bank Sports Days in the 1950s, such as inter-office relays, were for mixed teams. Furthermore, during the 1950s and 1960s, women were allowed increased access to the men's pavilion, particularly for social events.⁶²⁰ This did not mean, however, that all women's sports continued to thrive. By 1964, for example, the hockey section, at one time probably the most prestigious component of the Women's Sports Club, was very poorly supported.⁶²¹ This was an indication of a decline in active membership and numbers of women using the facilities at Roehampton were by the late 1960s insufficient to justify the maintenance of separate facilities, such as a bar, and undermining the rationale for the continued existence of a women-only club. Increasingly,

⁶¹⁹ Bond and Doughty, *The House*, pp. 188-193; Ann Long (Pearce) interviewed, *Southend Echo*, 16 May 2012, www.echo-news.co.uk/sport/olympicsnews/9710107/From_1950s_Olympic_Star_to_Rochford_pubs_landlady/ (accessed 21 May 2014). I am grateful to Professor Dilwyn Porter for this reference.

⁶²⁰ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1970, p. 227.

⁶²¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1964, p. 271.

women had more choices as to how to spend their leisure time – especially in a city the size of London; moreover, an increasing number of female Bank staff were married and had family responsibilities away from the workplace. There were, in addition, local difficulties with public transport which made Roehampton more difficult to access even for staff living relatively nearby.⁶²²



3:2: The Bank of England Sports Day 1957. Inter-office Mixed Relay

Source: BoE, *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*, September 1957.

The decision to invest in new indoor facilities and a swimming pool at Roehampton in 1970 represented a positive response to this problem but effectively sealed the fate of the separate men's and women's clubs. This, in itself testified to the strength of the belief

⁶²² BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1970, p. 226.

that sport, along with other recreational provision, had a positive effect on employee morale, encouraging teamwork and commitment, even though its impact was never actually measured or, in this case, weighed in the banker's scales. Given the rapid turnover in female staff, it seems unlikely that the facilities at Roehampton, were sufficient in themselves to attract potential recruits though as other financial institutions, such as Lloyds Bank and the Midland Bank, which were competing in the same pool for clerical labour, were known to have excellent facilities, it was important for the Bank of England to be seen to be investing in this area, not least in order to maintain its reputation as a good employer. Sport may or may not have contributed to the achievement of harmony and efficiency at the workplace. *Games lubricate both mind and body* was the heading for one of the hockey section's contributions to *The Old Lady*.⁶²³ What is important is that the Bank believed sufficiently in this idea to invest in it for both men and women so that by 1970 a kind of tradition had been established which served as a platform for the new combined club.

Social Recreation for Bank of England Employees

As we have seen in relation to Raleigh and Robinsons, non-sporting recreational activities also have to be taken into account in order to provide a more complete view of available provision. They were especially important as part of any industrial welfare package, not least because they engaged with employees who had no particular interest in sport, competitive or otherwise, including older employees and pensioners. While it would be unwise to separate sports and social activities too rigidly – a drink or two in the Sports Club bar after a match was clearly both social and sports-related – the non-sporting recreational clubs and societies at the Bank were quite separate. There was no overarching 'Sports and

⁶²³ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1971, p. 68.

Social' club as there was at Raleigh and Robinsons, for example. However, it is clear that numerous opportunities were available to pursue a wide range of interests ranging from amateur dramatics and opera, to horticulture, literature and even scouting. These activities often involved interaction between male and female staff and cooperation between staff from different grades. They also allowed the Bank, informally, to reach out and make connections with employees' homes and families; they reached into their gardens and greenhouses and provided occasions to meet, for example, when plays or operas were performed. The survey of the period 1918-70 that follows inevitably focuses most on those areas where activities are well documented via coverage in *The Old Lady*. The Bank of England Operatic, Dramatic, & Orchestral Society (hereafter OD&OS) would seem like a reasonable place to start, especially as it began in 1921 at the time of the first issue of the house magazine which faithfully recorded its activities thereafter.

The OD&OS started out as simply the Operatic Society when it offered Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* at the King's Hall, Covent Garden in February 1921. In 1922, when it put on a double bill featuring *The Nelson Touch* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*, 'Dramatic' had been added to its title.⁶²⁴ By 1926, 'Orchestral' had been incorporated, though an orchestra had been in existence from the start with magazine notes referring to the bank's musical talent as 'establishing its position among the best amateur orchestras in town'.⁶²⁵ The orchestra was dropped in 1937, OD&OS reverting to simply O&DS.⁶²⁶ If *The Old Lady* is a reliable guide, OD&OS was considered to be a highly significant organisation with three full pages of text and illustration in June 1921 devoted to its latest production, more coverage

⁶²⁴ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1921, p. 59.

⁶²⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1926, pp.370-371.

⁶²⁶ BoE 43/1, Bank of England Operatic and Dramatic Society Rules Book, 1937.

than was given to any other society. Along with obligatory references to 'enthusiasm', 'hard work' and 'tradition' (which implies that there may have been an earlier version of OD&OS) the emphasis was on giving an honourable mention to all those who had contributed to the production (*Trial by Jury*). As in local newspapers, the listing of individual names seems to have been a very important aspect of reporting in this area with each cast member congratulated on their performance.⁶²⁷ Frustratingly, as with so many clubs and societies featured in works magazines there is little detail as to membership numbers. However, the cast for the 1930 production of *Tell me More* featured over fifty individuals, not including orchestra, production, stage and directorial staff. On this basis a figure in excess of three figures could comfortably be achieved by the society. But the OD&OS was not the only active society in its field, at least in 1930. The 'D. R. Players' were also active, notes in *The Old Lady* mentioning that, like the OD&OS, 'the D. R. Players recruits its ladies from outside'.⁶²⁸

An orchestral concert given at the Hotel Cecil in the early 1920s with soloists brought in for the occasion, prompted *The Old Lady* to comment that 'there are so many artists amongst or connected with staff of the Bank, not necessarily of any section of the Society, that it seems a pity to go "outside" for talent'.⁶²⁹ It was not, however, unusual. Amateur choral societies and orchestras, then as now, often invited guests, sometimes professionals to take leading parts in performances. At Robinsons, as we have seen, plays were sometimes directed by a theatre professional. Arguably, putting on a play, an opera or a concert for the public made it especially important that the performance reflected

⁶²⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1921, pp. 64-6.

⁶²⁸ BoEA *The Old Lady*, March 1930, pp. 53-7.

⁶²⁹ *The Old Lady*, Vol.1, No.6, June 1922, p.221

creditably on the OD&OS and the Bank, not least to avoid unfavourable comparisons with similar events staged by societies from other banks and financial institutions in the relatively small world of the City of London. Making a good impression was important and this meant ensuring that available talent at the Bank was used – Barry Hoffman recalled that he had been ‘ordered’ to volunteer for a production in the 1950s on account of his theatrical experience at school – as well as calling on the services of outsiders if necessary.⁶³⁰ It was also important to be serious; there was no place for pantomimes in the OD&OS schedule; also, unlike the Musical Society at the printing works, no pierrots or minstrels.⁶³¹

Staging a successful production involved utilising a variety of skills some theatrical, some organisational, some practical – and also meant working as a team. It also involved colleagues from different departments in the Bank working together for a common cause. There were incentives for individual members of the OD&OS in the form of prizes – the Nevill Cup (men) and the Goodall Cup (women) awarded to members who, in the opinion of the committee, had given outstanding service to the society over the previous twelve months.⁶³² Official recognition with rewards presented by senior members of management was one way in which employers could show approval of the OD&OS, what it stood for and its contribution to staff morale and efficiency.

⁶³⁰ Barry Hoffmann Interview.

⁶³¹ BoE, PW1/3, *Britannia Quarterly*, August 1922, p. 97.

⁶³² BoE, 43/1, Drama & Operatic Society Rules Book, 1937; Operatic and Drama Society Awards Winners, E43/13, 1968-74.



3:3: Bank of England Operatic, Dramatic and Orchestral Society, 1930

Source: BoE, *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*, March 1930.

Social activities at the Bank of England appear to have been severely curtailed at the start of the Second World War. 'Mass Observation concluded what everybody knew, that it was the Black-Out that was having the greatest impact on people's lives'; 'staying in and going to bed early' were favoured options. A direct hit by a bomb on the Bank tube station in January 1940 which killed 111 people could not have helped.⁶³³ As far as the O&DS was concerned, transfers to Hurstbourne and the call-up effectively brought activities to a halt until 1946 when an annual general meeting, chaired by the Deputy Governor, followed by a 'jolly Opening to the Season Party', signalled a return to normality. The Musical Society was restarted at about the same time, issuing an appeal for 'many more singers, particularly

⁶³³ R. Hewison, *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-1945* (London: Quartet Books, 1979, p.21; P. Ziegler, *London at War 1939-1945* (London: Mandarin, 1997), p.117.

men'.⁶³⁴ Thereafter the O&DS returned to its pre-war place at the heart of the Bank's recreational activities making the same demands on its members as before. A review of its 1950 production of Noel Coward's *This Happy Breed* observed that 'the principal weakness ... was the indifferent diction of most of the younger members of the cast'; in addition, 'serious irritation arose from the slapdash inadequacy of the stage setting'.⁶³⁵ At Marks & Spencer, where the Dramatic Society had put on Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Niggers* as well as a pantomime, the reviews tended to be more homely and less critical. Margaret Bates was praised for overcoming a bout of flu to perform; in Dick Whittington, 'the chorus girls sang well and looked pretty'.⁶³⁶ Clearly something more was expected of O&DS productions, especially as they were often performed away from headquarters – such as the Embassy Theatre in Hampstead - effectively exposing the Bank and its staff to a wider audience.

However, it was not always possible to sustain a programme at the levels required and O&DS appears to have suffered a setback in the 1960s, having to cancel a production of *The Music Man* in 1966 owing to lack of support. A competition to encourage new writing in *The Old Lady* prompted a 23-year-old Oxford graduate, previously the music critic of the Oxford student magazine *Cherwell*, to contribute his thoughts on 'Amateur Dramatics and the Professional Aesthete', in which praise was heaped on the amateur tradition in English cricket, now in decline. 'It seems the British have always had a soft spot for amateurism', he observed, but there were not enough 'amateurs' around to sustain high standards either in English cricket or the O&DS. The increasing tendency of Bank staff to live at some distance from their work was offered as an explanation; the popularity of television

⁶³⁴ BoE, *The Old Lady*, December 1946, p. 206.

⁶³⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1950, p. 379.

⁶³⁶ *Sparks*, Winter 1950, pp. 16-17, author's collection.

as another. It was regrettable but it seemed that there was a liking for 'passive entertainment provided by a professional minority'.⁶³⁷ The crisis in O&DS affairs seems to have been short-lived. By 1970, the society's production of *Billy Liar* – albeit one that required a much smaller cast than *The Music Man* – was reported to have been favourably reviewed by the drama critic of the Dimpleby group of local newspapers; these circulated widely in suburban London, where O&DS performers and the families and friends who might be expected to comprise their audiences were to be found.⁶³⁸

Amateur dramatics, as we have seen, was a recreational activity that bridged both the manufacturing companies under consideration and the Bank of England. In 1920, a female clerk, writing in the *Journal of Industrial Welfare* had urged employers to start libraries; 'the employer who wants to do his honest best to understand his staff and ... to teach his staff to understand him' was encouraged to realise the infinite possibilities of books.⁶³⁹ Here, the Bank of England was well in advance of the trend, having had a library on the premises at Threadneedle Street since 1850. In an article celebrating the library's centenary *The Old Lady* recorded that it had been established following a suggestion by one or more members of the clerical staff and had been aided by financial support from the Court of Directors. It was in the library, the author of the article recalled, 'where the happiest hours of my bank life were spent in the stimulating companionship of books'.⁶⁴⁰ In 1920 there were 675 members who had access to 16,639 volumes.⁶⁴¹ The interwar years

⁶³⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1966, pp. 18-20.

⁶³⁸ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1971, p. 48.

⁶³⁹ MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/2, *Journal of Industrial Welfare*, April 1920, 118.

⁶⁴⁰ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1950, pp. 306-308.

⁶⁴¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1922, p. 228.

were marked by continued expansion with membership in 1930 standing at 1,700 (742 women; 958 men), though men, especially those holding senior positions in the Bank, tended to dominate on the committee of the Bank's Library and Literary Association [LLA].⁶⁴² This growth might be explained to a certain extent by increased staff numbers but is especially remarkable in view of the expansion of public library facilities in this period; public library loans rose from 85 to 247million between 1924 and 1939.⁶⁴³ A library was also established at the printing works but was less successful. It was resurrected in 1916, having been closed for a number of years, but membership was falling by 1919 and the *Britannia Quarterly* was appealing rather desperately for support.⁶⁴⁴

At the Bank itself, the LLA proved extremely durable, surviving two World Wars and changing fashions in the use of leisure in peacetime. Its centrality to the Bank's operations was emphasised in 1971 by the Governor, Sir Leslie O'Brien, who pointed out that *The Old Lady* served not only as a house magazine but as the journal of the LLA. A Library Centenary Award had been initiated in 1950, awarded annually for the best literary contribution to *The Old Lady* with judges including eminent literary figures such as Sir Osbert Sitwell and Sir John Betjeman.⁶⁴⁵ Articles on literary topics, book reviews and poems had been a feature of the magazine since its first appearance underpinning the prestige

⁶⁴² BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1950, p. 308.

⁶⁴³ Pugh, *We Danced all Night*, pp. 272-73, 328.

⁶⁴⁴ BoE, PW1/1, *Britannia Quarterly*, June 1919, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1971, pp. 3, 37.

attached to the LLA as the oldest of the Bank's societies and the forerunner of many others which had made 'a notable indirect contribution to this very important side of Bank's life'.⁶⁴⁶

The existence of a Debating Society also marked the recreational activities at the Bank of England as very different from those to be found in factories such as at Raleigh or Robinsons. Though its precise origins are uncertain it appears to have emerged in the 1920s and reflected the recruitment in significant numbers of bright young men from the public schools and universities where there was a strong debating tradition. Recent events reported in 1930 included debates with teams from Oxford, Cambridge and London universities and the idea of an Inter-Banks Debating Society was raised. The proposition debated when the Bank's speakers took on a team from the University of London Union had been 'That this House Deplores the Entry of Women into Public Life'.⁶⁴⁷ Indications relating to prominent personalities suggest that the Debating Society was dominated by men, despite the increasing numbers of women employed at the Bank. Of the forty members mentioned in one report only five were women with men holding the most prestigious and important offices.⁶⁴⁸ For those considering joining the Debating Society 'Beginners' Practice Classes' were available but though a large membership was claimed – between 450 and 700 in the 1930s – it seems likely that it was socially rather exclusive.⁶⁴⁹ Options under consideration when it folded in 1952 included doubling the annual subscription from one to two shillings and asking visiting societies to contribute to the cost of dinners. This was

⁶⁴⁶ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1950, p. 302.

⁶⁴⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, pp. 54-5.

⁶⁴⁸ BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1930, pp.48-51.

⁶⁴⁹ BoE, Debating Society Notes, E59/1-3, 1932.

deemed preferable to asking the Court of Directors for a subsidy.⁶⁵⁰ To a large extent the Bank's activities were a microcosm of the intellectual pursuits that permeated the City more generally where debating societies were long established. Moreover, it seems likely that there were long-term benefits to be gained all-round when those who were likely to end up in senior positions engaged with current affairs while honing their skills of persuasion.

Of all the societies active at the Bank of England, the Bank Horticultural Society (BHS) appears to have been the most democratic, or at least to have engaged the widest spread of employees, men and women, young and old, clerks and printers (though the printing works had its own society), flower arrangers and vegetable growers. As at Raleigh and Robinsons, the BHS offered opportunities to socialise, opportunities to learn, opportunities to show and compete, and also opportunities to purchase plants and seeds at a discount. This winning combination goes a long way towards explaining the BHS's popularity. At its first annual general meeting in 1930, when more women than men were present, it was reported that the society had a membership of 250; twenty years later this figure had risen to 1,156.⁶⁵¹ Perhaps the principal benefit that members derived from their annual subscription of 2s 6d was that they could purchase seeds at reduced prices from firms such as Daniels of Norwich and Bees of Liverpool as a result of deals brokered by the BHS.⁶⁵² As we have seen this kind of arrangement was not uncommon. Additionally, it is important to note that one of the founding objectives of the club was to promote inter-office co-operation and discussion through the 'mutual exchange of roots, plants and

⁶⁵⁰ BoE, E59/1-3, Memorandum on the debating society finances, 1935-1952.

⁶⁵¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, p. 55; March 1950, p. 381.

⁶⁵² BoE, *The Old Lady*, March, 1930, p. 55.

cuttings'.⁶⁵³ It seems likely that horticulture, by encouraging exchanges of this kind, would have helped to break down the barriers that sometimes left Bank staff feeling isolated in their different departments. Moreover, the BHS annual show provided an opportunity to show off the Bank's impressive facilities to the public.

At the printing works the emphasis was on growing vegetables rather than flowers. The August 1927 issue of the *Britannia Quarterly* asked: 'Have you planted all the winter greens and spring cabbage you need?' and 'Have you lifted and dried your shallots?'.⁶⁵⁴ Whereas, at Threadneedle Street, *The Old Lady*, welcoming the BHS just after it had been formed, commented with approval on 'the profusion of floral adornment which embellishes so many offices, particularly those in which the lady members of staff are much in evidence'.⁶⁵⁵ The list of prize-winners for the 49 classes at the 1957 annual show indicates that the aesthetic pleasures of gardening continued to dominate; flowers and shrubs far outnumbered fruit and vegetables. The Inter-Office Challenge Shield competition for Floral Display was won by 'General Card Index', the prize for Produce by 'Dividend'.⁶⁵⁶ Apart from BHS's own annual show there were other opportunities for horticulturalists to socialise. In 1958, for example, there were visits to Sunningdale Nurseries in Windlesham and Saville Gardens in Windsor Great Park as well as to the Combined Banks' Show at the Royal Exchange in which some BHS members competed.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵³ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, p. 56.

⁶⁵⁴ BoE, PWI/6, *Britannia Quarterly*, August 1927, p. 212.

⁶⁵⁵ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁶ For the full list see BoE, *The Old Lady*, September 1957, p. 173.

⁶⁵⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1958, p. 46.

It would be misleading to think of such events – sociable though they were – as the equivalent of works outings in the manufacturing sector without, of course, the beer and skittles. They were more modest affairs, organised by the BHS itself which allowed like-minded members to enjoy a day-out together in pursuit of their mutual interest in horticulture, an interest that was largely pursued in their own gardens at home, separately from their colleagues and at a distance from their place of work. Despite an appeal, published in 1930 – ‘Gardeners and Gardeneresses ... let us be “Matey”’, there were limits.⁶⁵⁸ The BHS, just as much as the LLA, reflected the occupational hierarchy at the Bank with its prevailing bias against women. For a society that was so well supported by female staff the structure of the BHS committee was considerably lop-sided. In 1958, the President was Lord Kindersley, whilst the positions of Chairman of Committee, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Asst. Treasurer, Hon. Secretary and Hon. Asst. Secretary were all held by men.⁶⁵⁹ This accurately reflected the culture of an organisation that sought to attract men by offering them a chance to embark on a professional career with the prospect of foreign travel while women were offered only ‘good company and surroundings’.⁶⁶⁰

Though class and gender divisions were in evidence across all aspects of sports and social provision at the Bank of England, some activities, especially if they were related to charity showed a significant degree of cohesion with staff pulling together in aid of a common cause, especially if it had a charitable or outreach dimension. The Bank Clerks’ Orphanage (BCO) and the Bank of England Staff Fund for Voluntary Hospitals (BESFVH) were

⁶⁵⁸ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, p.56.

⁶⁵⁹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1958, p. 46.

⁶⁶⁰ *Women in the Bank*, p. 23.

important in this respect. Significant voluntary effort was expended to raise funds for the BCO, specifically to pay for the maintenance of the children of deceased bank clerks at London orphanages. In 1929, the contributions of around a thousand clerks, supplemented by £105 donated by the Governor and Court, was sufficient to pay for the care of five unfortunate children at the rate of £80 a year.⁶⁶¹ Between 1923 and 1930 the St Christopher's Club, an organisation devoted to the interests of low- paid non-clerical staff such as messengers and porters, raised £9,737 for Guys Hospital (then located nearby in the City of London) and £2,014 for the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital (for women). Fund-raising of this kind was a form of self-help but was seen as a unifying activity. At the annual meeting of the BESFVH in 1930, the chairman, Mr Bryant, a first-class clerk in the Bank Branches Office, observed that 'the Hospital Meeting' was '*the* family gathering of the bank' in that the fund 'united practically everybody in the service.'⁶⁶²

At a later date and on a more modest scale, the Scout Association, active at the Bank from 1938 onwards, reflected in its own way, contemporary concerns for children growing up in deprived urban areas who had limited opportunities to experience 'the great outdoors'.⁶⁶³ Its stated objects were 'to promote the interests of the Boy Scouts Association by fostering mutual assistance' embodying broad principles which Simon Phillips has argued, were 'transferable to a variety of other provinces at work', whilst scout loyalty might well

⁶⁶¹ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1930, p. 58.

⁶⁶² BoE, *The Old Lady*, June 1930, p. 53.

⁶⁶³ See D. Pomfret, 'The City of Evil and the Great Outdoors: the modern Health Movement and the Urban Young, 1918-40', *Urban History*, 28 (3), (2001), 405-406.

reinforce allegiance to one's employer.⁶⁶⁴ Though it had relatively few members – 32 in 1953 - the Scouts, later joined by some Girl Guides, focused their efforts on supporting the Roland House Scout Settlement set up to provide a base for scouting in the unpromising territory of the East End of London, again effectively a local charity as far as the Bank was concerned. At times this involved more than simply raising money; Scouts and Guides from the Bank attended a briefing session at a local police station and training evenings at Baden Powell House to equip them for the work they had chosen to undertake in aid of what *The Old Lady* confirmed was “a worthwhile cause”.⁶⁶⁵ Much is made by business historians of employees showing loyalty to the firm through sports and social clubs -particularly sports teams. As we have seen at Raleigh and Robinsons and again at the Bank of England, charitable efforts supply a further strand to this theme where loyalty is a part of a wider social discourse.

Conclusions

The sports and social provision at the Bank of England was in many ways different from that on offer at Raleigh and Robinsons. These differences reflected an organisation that recruited largely from a middle-class base, including a relatively high proportion of well-qualified graduate staff, and a relatively high proportion of women, especially on the clerical staff, especially after 1945. This affected the particular mix of sporting and recreational activities available. The Governor and the Court of the Bank of England clearly believed that they

⁶⁶⁴ BoEA, E51/1, Bank of England Scout Society Rules and Objects, 1951; Phillips, ‘Industrial Welfare and Recreation’, p. 217.

⁶⁶⁵ BoE, E51/1, Scout Society Accounts, 1953; *The Old Lady*, December 1967, pp. 260-261; March 1971, pp. 57-8.

should support such activities, as the showpiece facilities at Roehampton suggest but the impression is that they saw themselves as facilitators, keeping largely in the background, while making strategic appearances to present prizes, thus reminding employees of the hierarchy that existed within the Bank. Barry Hoffmann points out that the senior managers and directors were very 'open' to new clubs often providing both logistical and financial help. There are parallels here with the manufacturing sector firms studied where the impetus generally came from below but was supported from the top. It is possible that the sports facilities on offer at Roehampton were important in attracting and retaining the kind of employee that the Bank needed – especially young men with public school and university backgrounds who were keen on sport - not least because other financial sector institutions tended to have good facilities. The decision to modernise the facilities at Roehampton in the late 1960s suggests that the management thought that it was important to compete in this area or, at least, not to get left behind. However, the impact of any intervention from the top was probably less than could be achieved by Raleigh in Nottingham or Robinsons in Chesterfield as the Bank's workforce was spread out across London's suburbia and beyond. Roehampton may have been attractive to employees living in South-West London, but was less likely to have been a factor in recruitment and retention for employees from, North-East London, for example, or for those commuting from Kent or Essex.⁶⁶⁶ One school-leaver from Leytonstone (E11) employed as a clerk in the General Records Office from 1966-67 was aware that the Bank looked after their staff well but did not go to Roehampton (SW15) once; she thought it was 'a bit out of the way'.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁶ Barry Hoffman interview.

⁶⁶⁷ Information supplied by Mrs Eryl Wilson, 24 May 2014.

As an employer the Bank of England tended to reflect the gender and class divisions prevailing more generally in British society across the period. Its employment practices routinely discriminated against women, for example, in relation to the marriage bar and age of retirement. In these conditions it is not surprising to find that the Men's and Women's Sports Clubs were separate entities until 1970. Class differentiation is also apparent in the array of sports and activities on offer – and is brought sharply into focus when activities of those employed at Threadneedle Street are compared with those at the printing works. The Bank of England had a thriving chess society in the interwar period entering teams in the London Banks League and playing friendly matches against opponents from the Insurance Chess Club and the Stock Exchange.⁶⁶⁸ When, in 1931, they entertained visitors from the printing works it was from the Chess, Draughts and Dominoes Club, the title – and the games – more redolent of the public house and indicating a more working-class membership. The printers recorded that they had been given 'a warm and hearty welcome' at the Bank, but it is clear that the visit entailed a meeting – even if not a clash – of cultures.⁶⁶⁹ Similarly, there seems to have been some social distance between the Bank of England Arts Society – where it seems to have been expected that some members would aspire to submit to the Royal Academy's annual show – and the Arts, Crafts and Hobbies Exhibition staged at the printing works.⁶⁷⁰ Class difference was also evident in the two house magazines. While *The Old Lady* was high-minded and sometimes literary in tone the *Britannia Quarterly* was more populist; in August 1949, for example, its *Mainly for Women*

⁶⁶⁸ BoE, *The Old Lady*, September 1926, p. 337.

⁶⁶⁹ BoE, PWI/9, *Britannia Quarterly*, February 1932, p. 215.

⁶⁷⁰ BoE, *The Old Lady*, September 1957, p. 175.

feature included an article on 'How to Choose a Boy Friend', which would have looked out-of-place in its sister publication.⁶⁷¹

There are, of course, some similarities between sports and social activities at the Bank of England and those available at Raleigh and Robinsons. The range of clubs and societies was broadly similar, even if the emphasis on particular activities varied according to geographical and social location. It seems that it was usually employees that took the initiative in proposing new activities with management responding helpfully. Evidence suggest that employers generally recognised the company magazines had an important part to play in delivering an effective industrial welfare strategy, or simply in underpinning harmonious relations at the workplace: the Industrial Welfare Society's Sixth Annual Conference in 1927 devoted its attention entirely to *Works and Staff Magazines*.⁶⁷² At the Bank, *The Old Lady* appears to have been an effective notice board for sports and social activities and was instrumental; in helping to ensure the longevity of many clubs and societies.

Appearances were important in banking, especially at the Bank of England, and there was no equivalent of the annual works outing at Raleigh and Robinsons, with management subsidising a trip to the seaside, fish and chips and beer. It seems likely that this kind of outing would have had less appeal for white-collared or white-bloused employees, especially in the middle and higher grades. This is not to say that societies like the BHS did not organise events of their own. Significantly, in 1967, a flight was chartered which carried 170 current and former staff to New York which was organised by the staff

⁶⁷¹ BoE, *Britannia Quarterly*, PWI/5, August 1949, p. 107.

⁶⁷² MRC, MSS.303/B19/1/9, *Industrial Welfare Journal*, April 1927, p. 129.

themselves via the banks welfare department. This was an interesting development reflecting the onset of relatively cheap long-haul air travel and rising aspirations but it was not entirely successful. Originally 700 seats were applied for but numbers fell after the Chancellor imposed a £50 (current equivalent £790) limit on individuals taking money abroad. As this included money spent on hotels and meals it meant that few apart from Bank employees with family and friends in America were in a position to take advantage of the opportunity.⁶⁷³ This ambitious overseas venture – not matched in our period by any of the manufacturing companies under consideration – underlines ways in which the Bank of England was different; its workforce was relatively affluent in that 700 could even contemplate paying the discounted return fare to New York. Yet, despite differences, the example of the Bank of England suggests that the impact of an industrial welfare strategy, whether formalised or not, could encourage some staff to bond strongly with management. For Barry Hoffman, for example, who regarded his employers as ‘benign’, sports and social provision was central to his working life at the Bank and helped him to form a deep attachment that has continued into his retirement.⁶⁷⁴ In common with individuals referred to at both Raleigh and Robinsons, Barry fully embraced the recreational provision on offer and as an honorary club official and committee-man helped his employer to deliver it. He was an inveterate joiner of sports clubs, principally football, cricket and hockey; he entered vegetables for the annual BHS show and appeared in amateur dramatics, all with the benign assistance and approval of his employers.

⁶⁷³ For the impact of the £50 limit see S. Barton, *Working-Class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840-1970*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 209.

⁶⁷⁴ Barry Hoffmann interview.

Chapter 5

J. Lyons & Co Ltd

A walk across the cricket field, opposite the pavilion, occupies some little time, for it is a spacious place, where, I am told, four games can take place simultaneously ... All this, and more to come, is for the benefit of those who helped make Lyons a household name. An appreciation of loyalty, of untiring effort, of tasks well done in trying times.⁶⁷⁵

Sports and recreation at J. Lyons & Co. Ltd, which supplies our final case study, offers an opportunity to examine provision for workers in both manufacturing and services within a single large company. Though Lyons - famed for its teashops and corner houses - was perhaps best known for catering, it was also a major food manufacturer and processor. The Lyons Club, founded in 1913, provided the umbrella under which numerous sports and recreational activities took place and, as at Raleigh, Robinsons and the Bank of England, the firm's directors seem to have actively encouraged such developments, not least by providing first-class sports facilities at the 66-acre Sudbury Hill Sports Grounds, opened in August 1919 in memory of 'those noble fellows who ... went forth into the Great War and laid down their precious lives'. Significantly, sport was not the only activity to take place at Sudbury; at various times camping holidays were offered and it was also the site for the annual 'Miss Lyons' competition.⁶⁷⁶ While the emphasis here – in order to provide balance with the preceding studies of Raleigh and Robinsons – is largely on the service sector workers in catering, limited attention will also be given to those employed in Lyons

⁶⁷⁵ London Metropolitan Archives [hereafter LMA], ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, September 1919, p. 20.

⁶⁷⁶ P. Bird, *The First Food Empire: A History of J. Lyons & Company* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 2000), p. 114.

factories. It should be noted that membership of the Lyons Club was open to all employees and that it is not always easy to identify individuals with a particular section or department in *The Lyons Mail* and other company literature. Though it is clear that hotel, teashop and corner house workers in London's West End, for example, often came together to pursue sport and other activities in their own way, as might be expected in a firm that employed a total of 35,000 people in 1939 but spread widely over many different sites, mainly in and around West London.⁶⁷⁷

The Lyons Company grew out of the tobacco business established by Montague Gluckstein and his cousin Alfred Salmon based in London's East End. After 1887 the firm diversified into catering at large scale exhibitions and on this basis was incorporated as a public company in 1894. On moving into catering, Gluckstein and Salmon approached Joseph Lyons, who had previous experience in this area and who shared their vision for catering on a mass scale, using his name to front the business as it developed in the last years of the nineteenth century. A significant landmark in the company's history was the opening of the first Lyons teashop at 213 Piccadilly in 1894; the first of a chain of 250 up and down the country. Richardson has noted that in the period between 1895 and 1914 a new teashop was opened on average every six weeks. From around 1900, Lyons catering outlets and the various catering concessions awarded to the firm for various high-profile events, such as The Chelsea Flower Show and the All-England Lawn Tennis Championship at Wimbledon, were supplied with drinks, meals and snacks produced at the extensive Cadby

⁶⁷⁷ M. Glucksman, *Women Assemble: Women Workers and the New Industries in Inter-War Britain* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 124.

Hall site at Hammersmith. In 1923, a 70-acre site was purchased at Greenford, Middlesex, and this became the centre of Lyons tea, coffee blending and packaging operations.⁶⁷⁸

At the start of the period with which this thesis is concerned, therefore, J. Lyons & Co. was already a business of significant size engaged in a variety of service and manufacturing sector activities. The *Weekly Despatch*, reporting the death of Montague Gluckstein in 1922, noted that 'London lost one of its big business brains yesterday'; by this time the company that Gluckstein had co-founded with Salmon employed around 22,000 people, of which 18,000 were said to be members of the Lyons Club.⁶⁷⁹ One important feature of the Lyons workforce, which has a major impact in shaping the nature of the sports and social provision on offer, was the relatively high proportion of women employed by the firm, especially the iconic 'Nippies' (waitresses) in teashops, corner houses and other catering outlets.⁶⁸⁰ Lyons maintained its high profile until the post-war period and was often in the forefront of innovation, especially in the commercial use of computers; LEO, the world's first to be used by a major company, was introduced in 1951. What it did not do successfully, however, was to adapt to changing public taste as Britain became more affluent in the 1950s and 1960s and its tea shops and corner houses felt the pressure of increased competition. Re-branding ('Jolyon') was largely unsuccessful and by the 1960s

⁶⁷⁸ D. J. Richardson, 'J. Lyons & Co. Ltd.: Caterers & Food Manufacturers, 1894 to 1939', in D. J. Oddy & D. S. Miller, (eds), *The Making of the Modern British Diet*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976), pp. 164-67; LMA, ACC/3527/307, *The Lyons Mail Centenary Edition 1894 – 1994*, p. 9; see also *Lyons 1887-1998: An Electronic History of J. Lyons & Co and Some of its 700 Subsidiaries*, www.kzwp.com/lyons (accessed 4 December 2009).

⁶⁷⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/428, *Weekly Dispatch*, 8 October 1922; LMA, ACC/3527/428, *The Lyons Mail*, Anniversary Supplement 1923.

⁶⁸⁰ Bird, *First Food Empire*, p. 114.

there were clear signs that Lyons was in decline; staffing levels in the Lyons hotel chain, for example, were being cut by up to 50%.⁶⁸¹ It is within this broad historical framework that the firm's sport and social provision will be examined.

Sport at Lyons before 1918

As at Raleigh, Robinsons and the Bank of England, there is evidence indicating that some Lyons employees were engaged in works-related sports and social activities before the First World War. At the end of the nineteenth century the working hours of men and women working in food and drink service industries tended to be long and arduous. The Royal Commission on Labour in 1893-94 heard evidence that suggested that a 70-hour week was not considered exceptional and that waitresses often worked more than 100 hours.⁶⁸² A typescript outline history of the Lyons Club written by an anonymous employee in 1943 recalled the working hours for most employees before the First World War were 9.00 am to 8.00 pm on weekdays and 9.00 am to 6.00 pm at weekends, thus precluding meaningful participation in sport and recreation. Despite this handicap, a group of workers interested in swimming came together regularly at Walham Green Baths from 1897 and a separate group at the Trocadero Restaurant formed their own swimming club at about the same time. The Walham Green group, about twenty people in all, became known as the Cadby Hall Swimming Club after 1902; it was considered to be the oldest sports and social section at the firm.⁶⁸³ At times the two groups of swimmers – one from the manufacturing sector, the

⁶⁸¹ Bird, *First Food Empire*, p. 205.

⁶⁸² C. Parratt, 'Little Means or time: working-class women and leisure in late Victorian and Edwardian England', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15 (2), (1998), 29.

⁶⁸³ LMA, ACC/3527/207, Lyons Club History.

other from the service sector, came together to represent the firm in various competitions against other London business houses, winning the Darnell Life Saving Cup for four years in succession between 1909 and 1912.⁶⁸⁴

Women's participation in sport appears to have been very limited before the First World War though the Lyons history website does carry an image of 'Lyons Girls' taking part in a walking race at Stamford Bridge at around the turn of the century. At this period, as Richard Holt has observed, sport and leisure activities for women were often 'banished to the sidelines'.⁶⁸⁵ Moreover, as Catriona Parrett's influential work has noted, there were significant constraints on female participation in this period, especially for working-class women, who had to undertake domestic duties at home while working for long hours and low pay in the factory or – as at Lyons after 1894 – in the teashop.⁶⁸⁶

Peter Bird, in his clearly illustrated history of the company, has argued that sport was 'vigorously encouraged by Lyons directors' and there is clear evidence of this before 1914. When the newly formed Cadby Hall Athletic Club held its first sports day at Putney Velodrome in 1903, Mr Joseph Lyons and his wife were in attendance along with 2,000 spectators.⁶⁸⁷ In the following year the Athletic Club had acquired land –purchased by the firm - at nearby Gunnersbury Lane where they continued activities until 1919.⁶⁸⁸ It was, however, in 1913 that Lyons & Co moved decisively in the direction of an industrial welfare

⁶⁸⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1913, p. 7.

⁶⁸⁵ *An Electronic History of Lyons & Co*, www.kzwp/lyons2/sports1.htm, (accessed 2 November 2012); R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 8.

⁶⁸⁶ Parratt, 'Little means or time', 42.

⁶⁸⁷ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 316.

⁶⁸⁸ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 316.

strategy in which sport was assigned a key role. On the title page of its very first issue *The Lyons Mail*, announced the formation of the Lyons Athletic Club (LAC). An appeal had gone out to 'every man and boy' urging them to support this new venture which was described as an 'Athletic and Social Club'. That 3,000 employees had responded to this appeal reinforces the centrality of the company magazine, which described itself as 'The Official Organ of Lyons Athletic Club', as a means of promoting and sustaining sports and social provision as part of broader industrial welfare strategies. The aim in 1913 was to promote 'closer comradeship' among the workforce at Lyons while disseminating a positive sense of corporate culture in a way similar to that described by Griffiths in his study of Lever Brothers.⁶⁸⁹ Words were quickly supported by deeds. In November 1913 the directors had bought the Linden House estate on the banks of the Thames converting the building into a clubhouse that would later offer a shooting range and an indoor rowing tank.⁶⁹⁰

This first edition of the house magazine also offers a glimpse into the type of Athletic Club that the directors wished to promote. Through the Lyons' Athletic Club Rules it is clear that the traditions of gentlemanly amateurism were to play an important part. Rule number 2, for example, stated that the club colours were to be 'light and dark blue' which, according to Peter Bird, were chosen because they resembled the colours used by the Oxford and Cambridge University teams. Rule 11 made it clear that 'Every member taking part in any Club Event shall be a *bona-fide* Amateur as defined by the Amateur Athletic Association

⁶⁸⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, Vol. 1, No.1, April 1913, Front Cover; J. Griffiths, 'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy ...': The Rites and Rituals of Company Life at Lever Brothers, c.1900- c.1990, *Business History*, 37(4), (1995), 28.

⁶⁹⁰ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 316.

(AAA)’.⁶⁹¹ As Jeremy Crump has demonstrated in, ‘the first decade of the twentieth century the amateur ethos was dominant in British athletics’.⁶⁹² This certainly seems to have been the case at Lyons though it was possibly emphasised in the rules in order to ensure that LAC members would benefit from club affiliation to the AAA. Suffice to say that the ethos of ‘true blue’ amateurism seems to have been of particular importance at Lyons when the company first began taking a serious interest in sport. In any case, the onset of war in 1914 led to a temporary reduction in sports activities at Lyons, though some inter-departmental sport such as cricket, football, rowing, swimming and billiards continued sporadically.

Women’s Sport at Lyons

The first edition of the house magazine in the post-war period highlighted three significant changes relating to works-based sports and social provision at Lyons. Firstly, the Lyons Athletic Club had now become the Lyons Club (LC) although Lyons Athletic Club was often still used to refer to sporting activity; secondly, Lyons had recently purchased 66 acres of land at Sudbury Hill, near Greenford in Middlesex, from the John Lewis Partnership which was to become the home for the firm’s rapidly expanding sports and social clubs.⁶⁹³ At the opening ceremony Lyons Club President Montague Gluckstein linked the new facility to the company’s plans for expansion when he talked of the desire to see staff levels grow to 100,000 over the next 10 years. There was, he suggested, ‘every reason for that

⁶⁹¹ LMA, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1913, p. 5.

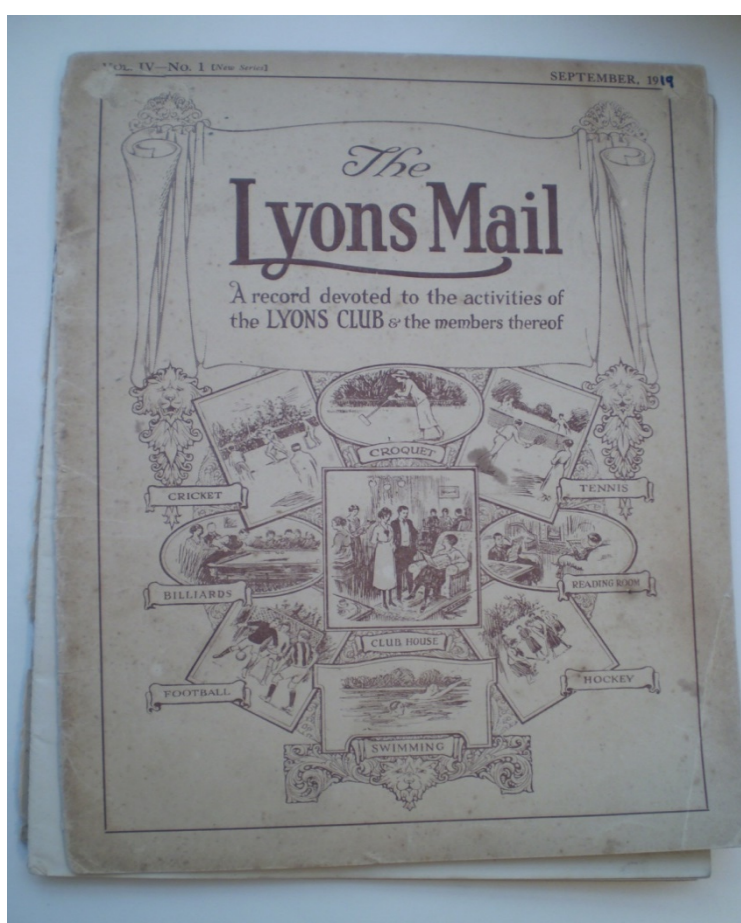
⁶⁹² J. Crump, ‘Athletics’, in T. Mason (ed), *Sport in Britain : A Social History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1989), pp. 48-52.

⁶⁹³ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, pp. 316-18.

expectation, given only the same devoted loyalty between us as in the past'.⁶⁹⁴ The implied link with the new facilities at Sudbury Hill was important here.

The third and most significant change, however, was the raised profile of female employees. The front cover of *The Lyons Mail* (see below) made this immediately apparent. Of the nine images on view five depict women - for example, hockey, croquet and tennis - whilst the club house and reading room further illustrate women as central figures.⁶⁹⁵



4:1: *The Lyons Mail*, front cover, September 1919.

Source: LMA, ACC/3527/268.

⁶⁹⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, September 1919, p. 1.

⁶⁹⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, September 1919, Front Cover.

Moreover, the women featured appear mainly to be young (probably unmarried) and therefore, it could be argued, with more time to spend on leisure activities than older women who were more likely to have been married with family responsibilities. Though it is important not to make the assumption that this was always the case - Selina Todd records the example of a 'very bitter' 15 - year old girl who was ordered by her father to give up her waitressing job in order to look after the house and her invalid mother – it is important to recognise the emerging importance of young women workers in the interwar period. Of the total female labour force between the wars, 45 percent were aged 24 and under.⁶⁹⁶ Indeed, Miriam Glucksmann has argued that, by the early 1920s, the employment of women in many positions previously taken by men had become an accomplished fact; the waiter had been replaced by the waitress.⁶⁹⁷ At Lyons this was a significant factor in the emergence of growing female participation in the firm's sports and social activities.

Some comment about the relationship between industrial relations and welfare is necessary here particularly in relation to an episode involving Lyons teashop workers in 1920. Some historians of welfare in the manufacturing sector have suggested that forms of work-based sport and social provision acted as an 'antidote to militant trade unionism'.⁶⁹⁸ Mosely, writing about Australia, went as far as to suggest that company welfare acted as an 'industrial bribe' though Claydon has pointed out that it is difficult to ascertain whether sports and social provision had any discernible impact on trade unionism in the

⁶⁹⁶ S. Todd, 'Young Women, Work, and Leisure in Interwar England', *Historical Journal*, 48, (3), 2005, 791-92, 794.

⁶⁹⁷ Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p. 124.

⁶⁹⁸ S. G. Jones, 'The Survival of Industrial Paternalism in the Cotton Districts: A View From The 1920s', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, 7, (1987), p. 7.

workplace.⁶⁹⁹ Arguably, the company's revamped post-war industrial welfare strategy had not been in place very long when Lyons teashop staff staged a well-publicised lighting strike in November 1920 and paraded through London after a colleague had been dismissed for wearing a union badge.⁷⁰⁰ The company's response was to ferry blackleg workers to the teashops while threatening strikers who did not return to work by 9 am the next day with instant dismissal.⁷⁰¹ In return the Catering Workers Union demanded union recognition, union wage rates and one week's notice.⁷⁰² The firm quickly overcame the strike with no evidence that the union were successful in their demands. In this instance, at least, it seems that Glucksmann may have been correct in arguing that there was an absence of an established paternalistic tradition at Lyons to counterbalance problems arising from poor working conditions and low-pay.⁷⁰³ However much the company invested in sports facilities at Sudbury, it tended to pursue an aggressive strategy in pursuit of profits. Earlier in 1920 the Hammersmith Profiteering Committee had recommended prosecution over the prices charged by Lyons for chocolates and matches.⁷⁰⁴ Its knee-jerk response to the strike fits this pattern and has to be seen against the long-term investment in industrial welfare.

This episode does not seem to have changed the company's attitude to sport for its women workers. It helped, no doubt, that women's sport could generate positive – if

⁶⁹⁹ P. Mosely, 'Factory Football: Paternalism and Profits', *Journal of the Australian Society for Sports History*, 2 (1), (1985), 25; T. Claydon, 'Trade Unions, Employers and Industrial Relations in the British Motor Industry c.1919 – 45', *Business History*, 29 (3), (1987), 311.

⁷⁰⁰ See www.britishpathe.com/video/lyons-lyons-teashop-strike/query/Lyons, (accessed 30 November 2012).

⁷⁰¹ Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, pp. 129-30.

⁷⁰² *The Times*, 20 May 1920, p. 5.

⁷⁰³ Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p. 130.

⁷⁰⁴ *The Times*, 9 January 1920, p. 14.

sometimes patronising – material for publicity purposes. As early as January 1920, the Popular Cafe Ladies Football team was holding trials for prospective players. *The Lyons Mail* portrays twenty-three girls replete in woollen caps posing with their (male) ‘lucky trainer’.⁷⁰⁵ As we have seen elsewhere, women’s football flourished during and just after the First World War, though it was regarded with increasing hostility. An article in the *Aberdeen Journal* published in January 1921, ‘Should Women Play Football? A National Winter Game That Is “For Men Only”’, was indicative of the changing climate of opinion.⁷⁰⁶ Using the headline ‘The Girls’ Tea Cup Final’, the *Daily Graphic* offered generous page space to a game played at Craven Cottage, Fulham, in April 1921; the Regent Palace Hotel and the Strand Corner House took to the field as a part of the Hotel and Restaurant Trades’ Charity Football Festival.⁷⁰⁷ A few months later, a women’s team from Lyons played against Ediswan at White Hart Lane, though Spurs later had to apologise to the FA as this was in breach of a recently-imposed ban on affiliated clubs making their grounds available for women’s football.⁷⁰⁸ At Lyons the attitude was generally more positive. *The Lyons Mail* reported in May 1921:

The ladies still show the same faults as last year. They do not understand how to trap the ball, they have apparently never been taught how, or to get their

⁷⁰⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/427/2, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1920, p. 127.

⁷⁰⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/427/2, *Aberdeen Journal*, 6 January 1921.

⁷⁰⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/427, *Daily Graphic*, April 1921.

⁷⁰⁸ J. Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women’s Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p.128.

balance before kicking. The result is, as often as not, the ball travels in the wrong direction.⁷⁰⁹

However, the report of the return match between the Strand and Regent Palace Hotel teams, played at Sudbury, made the point that the women had 'played serious football, and there was nothing undignified about it'.⁷¹⁰

Women's sport, the difficulties facing football notwithstanding, was prominently featured by *The Lyons Mail* from the start of the period onwards with athletics especially to the fore. There was a team based at the Strand Corner House in 1920 with about twenty members and the Regent Palace Hotel had a separate athletics club before deciding to amalgamate with the LAC in 1921.⁷¹¹ What this suggests is, firstly, that the importance of a critical mass of workers on one site in determining the shape of workplace-based sport at Lyons and, secondly, that the initiative, as we have seen elsewhere, often came from employees themselves. Stories about athletic nippies tended to be newsworthy and were, no doubt, welcomed by the company. The *Daily Graphic* in 1921 produced a striking image of a 'leaping' waitress to illustrate a story about the athletic prowess of the girls and women employed in Lyons tea rooms around London; 'there are crack runners and swimmers too, among those Cockney maids', it noted.⁷¹² Reports in the company magazine of the LAC annual sports day in 1923 emphasised the importance of primary group loyalty and teamwork, aspects of sport that transferred readily from the sports field to the workplace.

⁷⁰⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1921, p. 407.

⁷¹⁰ LMA, *Daily Chronicle*, 14 December 1921.

⁷¹¹ LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1921, p. 350.

⁷¹² LMA, ACC/3527/427/2, (Date not available), *Daily Graphic* 1921.

Inter-departmental tug-of-war contests – for women as well as for men – made an obvious point about the importance of ‘pulling together’. Though the women’s final was contested between the Regent Palace Hotel and Strand Corner House, a total of seven teams had entered, it was the team of ‘Amazons’ from the Coventry Street Corner House that were featured on the front page of *The Lyons Mail* (see image 4:2 p.271) The positive emphasis on physical strength in connection with Lyons’ predominantly female service-sector workforce is interesting, not least because, as Heller has convincingly argued, sport was often seen as a way in which male clerks – denied opportunities to display physical strength at work - could bolster their vulnerable masculinity.⁷¹³ Indeed, the image below of the Coventry Street Corner House team presents an interesting representation of female sporting activity at Lyons. It conveys a sense of women breaking boundaries which underpins Jennifer Hargreaves view of women’s sport as a potentially ‘liberating and creative experience’.⁷¹⁴

Despite the industrial relations problems it had experienced at the start of the 1920s, Lyons continued to expand its business and its workforce. On the manufacturing side, this meant investing in new production facilities; for example a new bread baking plant, opened in the mid-1920s, prompted output to rise to 350 tons per week within a couple of years. On the labour-intensive catering side this meant taking on more female staff; 90 per cent of Lyons catering staff were female in 1939. This may have driven the firm’s industrial welfare strategy to some extent, though Glucksmann’s interviews with

⁷¹³ M. Heller, ‘Sport, Bureaucracies and London Clerks 1880 – 1939’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (5), (2008), 604-606.

⁷¹⁴ J. Hargreaves, ‘The Promise and Problems of Women’s Leisure and Sport’, in C. Rojek (ed), *Leisure for Leisure*, (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 131.

former employees suggest that it did little in this respect. Employment conditions on the catering side tend to suggest that Lyons was reluctant to change its ways, even after the 1921 strike and were happy to exploit a labour market characterised by a plentiful supply of cheap, unskilled female labour. Low rates of pay, instant dismissal for breaking company rules and an intricate system of checking up on all bills made out by waitresses pointed to the continuing absence of a paternalistic culture, whatever went on at Sudbury.⁷¹⁵



4:2: Coventry Street Corner House Tug-of-War Team, 1933.

Source: LMA, ACC/3527/280, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1933, front cover.

⁷¹⁵ Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, pp. 124-129.

This did not mean, however, that Lyon's directors did not regard the Lyons Club as important. In an address to all Lyons workers in 1925, Samuel Gluckstein issued an appeal urging 'every member, active or non-active to obtain new members' and further insisting that 'the club is part of the firm, and every member of the firm should also be a member of the club'.⁷¹⁶

Sport was one way in which women workers could be encouraged to identify with the firm and water-based sports appear to have been very important in this respect in the interwar years. Members of the Lyons Swimming Club were presented with swimming costumes emblazoned with the Lyons Swimming Club badge, signifying corporate approval of a sporting activity which, as Ross McKibbin has observed, was especially popular as a summer activity for girls living in towns in the interwar period.⁷¹⁷ 'Lyons' Nymphs' were featured in photographs for the house magazine.⁷¹⁸ Further encouragement was evident at this time in the form of a 'Shops Section only' swimming competition though this also pointed to one of the perennial difficulties relating to works sport at Lyons, for cross-sector activities were hindered by variations in hours of work. Factory girls, for example, could not compete in afternoon races while those working in the teashops and coffee houses were unavailable in the evening.⁷¹⁹ Though some medical opinion in the 1920s decreed that swimming was an unsuitable exercise for young women because it entailed 'strain on the heart, this appeared to carry little weight at Lyons where the report on the 1926 gala

⁷¹⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/275, *The Lyons Mail*, September 1925, p. 119.

⁷¹⁷ R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918 – 1951*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 367.

⁷¹⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/274, *The Lyons Mail*, October 1924, p. 110; the reference to 'nymphs' echoes references to 'our waterbabies' in the Bank of England's in-house magazine.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid, p. 55.

ventured the opinion that 'swimming develops the lungs'.⁷²⁰ No-one exemplified this more than Miss McHattie, frequently featured as Lyons' star swimmer, who enjoyed notable success in the pool for a number of years before she married and gave up both her job and the sports activities that went with it.⁷²¹

Lyons was unusual in that it encouraged women to row. The Lyons Club location near the Thames may have been a factor here along with the purpose-built rowing tank installed at Linden House which was officially opened by Major Isidore Salmon in December 1930.⁷²² This was an activity which marked out the sports provision at the firm as progressive. The Women's Amateur Rowing Association was founded only in 1926 with the first Oxford versus Cambridge Ladies' race taking place a year later, although there is some evidence of women rowing competitively in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷²³ Women's rowing was clearly a sport that Lyons took seriously; only six months after the tank had been opened a team was successful in an international competition held at Cambridge, beating opposition from as far afield as Switzerland, France and Germany.⁷²⁴ Though rowing was predominantly a male, middle-class sport it is clear that at Lyons participation was on a more democratic basis and there is evidence to suggest that the firm encouraged working-class women employees to take up a sport that would normally have been beyond their reach, both socially and financially. It helped, no doubt, that women

⁷²⁰ *The Times*, 9 August 1922, p. 5; LMA, ACC/3527/276, *The Lyons Mail*, October 1926, p. 141.

⁷²¹ LMA, ACC/3527/280, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1930, p. 299.

⁷²² LMA, ACC/3527/280, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1930, p. 205.

⁷²³ C. Dodd, 'Rowing', in T. Mason (ed), *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 298-99.

⁷²⁴ *The Times*, 15 June 1931, p. 6.

rowers generated interest and favourable publicity. A British Pathe newsreel in 1939 featured the 'nippies' of the Lyons Rowing Club, which was said to have a membership of fifty.⁷²⁵ Again, Hargreaves's observation about the liberating aspect of women's sport seems to apply here.

It seems likely that the company's efforts to encourage its predominantly female workforce to take part in sport derived from an underlying concern with health, fitness and efficiency. Concerns regarding the health of women at the workplace – particularly young unmarried women and girls – had surfaced during the debates about national efficiency in the Edwardian period and continued through the war years and into the 1920s and 1930s.⁷²⁶ Lyons' anxieties in this direction were reflected in the company magazine which periodically carried articles advising employees on how to stay healthy and keep fit. For example, 'How to Keep Fit', in 1927, pointed out the benefits of cross-country running while 'Advice to Ladies' three years later – directed at women thinking of taking part in the inter-departmental tug-of-war tournament – advised that training was essential and that 'cigarette smoking MUST be temporarily abandoned'.⁷²⁷ Though there was some awareness at this time of the negative effect of smoking on health the numbers of women smokers was

⁷²⁵ www.britishpathe.com/video/women-rowing-aka-lyons-rowing-club-issue-title/query/lyons, (accessed 12 January 2013).

⁷²⁶ V. Long and H. Marland, 'From Danger and Motherhood to Health and Beauty: Health Advice for the Factory Girl in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 20 (4), (2009), 2.

⁷²⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, October 1927, p. 144; ACC/3527/280, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1930, p. 38.

increasing dramatically in the interwar years.⁷²⁸ Further advice for the female tug-of-war competitors centred on what they should eat and drink; it was recommended that between pulls intake should be sparse; half a cup of weak tea rather than lemonade and a biscuit rather than a cake. To underline the general point regarding fitness to compete, a photograph captioned 'Getting Fit' showed women from the Coventry Street Corner House running in formation in what amounts to a drill or parade ground setting.⁷²⁹

Nippies were often run off their feet during the course of a shift. For those women employees in more sedentary roles, sitting at a desk or a till, for example, *The Lyons Mail* suggested a 'Daily 10 Minute' series of exercises designed to benefit the whole body.⁷³⁰ The extent to which this advice was taken up is unknown but it seems clear that management at Lyons was aware of the importance of keeping its workforce fit and healthy if only to ensure maximum efficiency. Isidore Salmon, a director of the company from 1903 to 1941, was particularly concerned with this aspect of industrial welfare and in 1934 contributed to a *Times* feature on 'Sickness in Industry', effectively setting out the underlying principles of Lyons' policy in this area. 'All employees', he claimed, 'are medically examined on engagement with a view to ensuring that they are placed in work for which they are physically suitable'. He was broadly in agreement with social scientist Seebohm Rowntree who suggested that 'it is wasteful to have workers whose alertness and efficiency are below par because of poor health'.⁷³¹ This emphasis in the workplace for health and fitness tied in

⁷²⁸ P. Tinkler, 'Rebellion, Modernity, and Romance: Smoking as a Gendered Practice in Popular Young Women's Magazines, Britain 1918-1939', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24 (1), (2001) – abstract.

⁷²⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/280, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1930, p. 38.

⁷³⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/280, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1930, p. 219.

⁷³¹ *The Times*, 8 October 1934, p.10.

with a wider social movement relating specifically to women's health during the late 1920s and 1930s in which the Women's League of Health and Beauty and the Legion of Health and Happiness played leading roles. The term 'Keep Fit', Jill Matthews suggests, had first been used around 1929 in connection with the activities of the National Council of Girls' Clubs.⁷³² Lyons was happy to encourage women employees from all its various departments to follow this path by offering physical training sessions at the Cadby Hall gymnasium throughout the 1930s. The emphasis was on synchronised rhythmic movement designed to improve the figure; as Richard Holt has critically observed, 'fitness and femininity were not opposed qualities'. However, this might also be seen as an attempt to cajole women employees into 'uniformity and respectability'.⁷³³ In this instance the requirements of industrial welfare and industrial efficiency were well matched.

Sports activity for Lyons women employees was sufficiently well established by 1939 to continue throughout the Second World War, albeit at a much reduced level. The opening of the West End Section's Club House at the Oxford Street Corner House in September 1941 indicated that workers might still want to spend some leisure time together, though possibly the journey out to suburban Sudbury was now less manageable owing to wartime disruptions.⁷³⁴ Sue Bruley makes a convincing case, in relation to young women in South London, that the war opened up new opportunities; 'participation in mass leisure activities,

⁷³² J. J. Matthews, 'They had Such a Lot of Fun: The Women's League of Health and Beauty between the Wars', *History Workshop Journal*, 30 (1), (1990), 23.

⁷³³ Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 119; Matthews, 'They had Such a Lot of Fun', 42.

⁷³⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/207, Lyons Club History.

especially cinema and dancing, gave young women a new sense of independence'.⁷³⁵

London, however, had not been short of cinemas and dance-halls in the 1930s and it may be that the war simply made these counter-attractions more attractive. In 1943, though many sports clubs (for both men and women) were still functioning at Sudbury Hill - badminton, bowls, boxing, cricket, fencing, football, hockey, lawn tennis, rowing, shooting and swimming - an editorial on the front page of *The Lyons Mail* pointed out that the facilities were under-used and urged members to 'tell their friends'.⁷³⁶

'No supermarkets, no motorways, no teabags, no sliced bread ... Shops on every corner, pubs on every corner, cinemas in every high street, red telephone boxes, Lyons Corner Houses'.⁷³⁷ In this way, David Kynaston evokes everyday life in Britain as it emerged from the Second World War in 1945. Lyons seemed to be a part of the fabric but arguably the writing was already on the wall for its famous nippies as the firm's mass catering operations were already showing signs of stagnation. Only one new Lyons teashop was opened between 1938 and 1951; between 1954 and 1963 Lyons teashops began to close, with numbers dropping from 192 to 177, as new competitors appeared on the High Street.⁷³⁸ Added to Lyons' problems was what *The Times*, in 1959, considered to be the most important development in catering since the war: the growth of industrial canteens. Good meals could be accessed cheaply in many workplaces reducing the demand for Lyons'

⁷³⁵ S. Bruley, 'A Very Happy Crowd' : Women in Industry in South London in World War Two, *History Workshop Journal*, 44, (1997), 73.

⁷³⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/289, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1943, front cover; p. 4.

⁷³⁷ D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945 – 48: A World to Build*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 19.

⁷³⁸ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, pp. 189-91.

rather dated catering outlets.⁷³⁹ Later, the introduction of self-service in teashops and related changes in Lyons restaurants and corner houses led to a further shrinkage of female staff through to the 1970s.

These changes help to explain why *Lyons Mail* coverage of women's sport was progressively and significantly reduced from the mid-1940s onwards. In effect, it chronicles a period of relatively slow decline, gathering pace in the 1950s and 1960s with the closure of teashops and other outlets. In January 1947, the *Mail* published a photograph of the Ladies Teashop athletic team of 1939 displaying the silverware they had won in the hope that it would revive enthusiasm.⁷⁴⁰ Increasingly, however, the emphasis was on darts, hovering uneasily in terms of status between a pub game and an indoor sport. The house magazine could still take pride in the achievements of Lyons employees; the ladies darts team had just finished third in the London Business Houses League; moreover, darts was relatively easy to organise and this facilitated matches which brought together factory workers from Cadby Hall and Greenford and women from the West End catering operations.⁷⁴¹ An element of competition remained important for individual players and departmental teams; the Strand Corner House Ladies clearly derived much satisfaction from winning the four-a-side departmental cup competition, the mixed pairs cup, and the ladies singles championship in 1957.⁷⁴² Again, this development in terms of workplace recreation reflected a trend that was evident elsewhere. As the worst years of post-war austerity receded, opportunities for women to spend their leisure time more congenially expanded and one of the ways in which

⁷³⁹ *The Times*, 9 March 1959.

⁷⁴⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1947, p. 18.

⁷⁴¹ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1948, p. 23.

⁷⁴² LMA, ACC/3527/295, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1957, p. 10.

they succeeded in coming in from the cold was through the sociable activity of darts. The ladies teams at Lyons in the 1950s were among thousands playing in pubs and clubs around the country in leagues sponsored by breweries.⁷⁴³ It seems likely that women's darts prospered at Lyons in the post-war era because it could be combined with a night out and could be played at minimum inconvenience at a local venue or even at the workplace. Indeed, the finals of the firm's darts championships were held annually at the Coventry Street Corner House.

Though Lyons nippies tended to attract the most attention the firm also employed large numbers of women on clerical and other office duties relating to all areas of its work across both manufacturing and service sectors. In the time that elapsed between the census of 1931 and that of 1951; whereas the total of those in employment (male and female) increased by 9 per cent, the number of clerks and typists increased by a staggering 66 per cent.⁷⁴⁴ One indicator that reflected this trend at Lyons was the advent of a short-lived company publication, *The Lyons Journal*, devoted especially to the interests of the firm's white-collared and white-bloused workers, which was published between 1949 and 1952. Quite what prompted this publishing initiative is difficult to discern though it does suggest that boundaries between office, shop-floor and teashop were becoming more rigid. The impending arrival of computerisation may have been a factor; clerical staff may have been in particular need of reassurance with the introduction of LEO (Lyons Electronic Office) in 1951.⁷⁴⁵ The *Journal* followed much the same editorial line as the *Mail* seeking to boost

⁷⁴³ D. Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951 – 1957*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp.180-81.

⁷⁴⁴ *The Times*, 28 September 1959.

⁷⁴⁵ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 187; J. Hendry, 'The Teashop Computer Manufacturer: J. Lyons, LEO and the Potential and Limits of High-Tech Diversification', *Business History*, 29 (1), (1987), 81-85.

morale by praising staff for what they achieved both in the course of their daily work and, though to a lesser extent, in the spare time that they devoted to workplace-based recreation. The tone was relentlessly positive. Thus the Festival of Britain in 1951, for which Lyons provided much of the catering, was seen as a challenge to be met in the national interest; '[a] big increase in our customers will mean extra work ... the whole country is putting its best foot forward'; it was also a 'chance to cheer ourselves up'.⁷⁴⁶ In this way members of staff were encouraged to celebrate the firm's involvement with the occasion. On other occasions it was the achievements of staff that were celebrated. The April 1950 issue, for example, alerted readers to successes achieved by office staff across a range of indoor and outdoor sports – angling, billiards, bowls, darts, fencing, snooker and table tennis – with an array of trophies appropriately displayed.⁷⁴⁷

The Lyons Mail, which ran from 1913 to 1995, making it Britain's longest running house journal, outlasted *The Lyons Journal* and remains the principal source for this overview of sport and recreation at the firm throughout the period under consideration.⁷⁴⁸ It continued to cover women's sport in the post-war period, though in a somewhat *ad hoc* fashion. Though a range of sports was still available to Lyons' employees coverage in *The Lyons Mail* gives the impression that they may have been pursued less seriously than in the pre-war period. A sports day held at Sudbury for West-End employees in 1952, for example, was illustrated by images of girls competing in a sprint race as well as a covered sack race. Some competitors are attired in white sportswear whilst others appear to be wearing their everyday clothes. This does tend to portray a rather less formal and more inclusive event

⁷⁴⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/310, *The Lyons Journal*, May 1951, front cover.

⁷⁴⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/310, *The Lyons Journal*, April 1950, p. 6.

⁷⁴⁸ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 316.

from that of the Lyons Annual Gala (which will be addressed in greater detail in the men's section of this case study). With only four West-End Houses sending competitors it arguably was the case that women entered events on a whim and occasionally to make up numbers.⁷⁴⁹

Women's sport at Lyons was at its peak between the wars. Evidence gleaned through the house magazine shows the centrality of females as participants in a wide range of sporting activities. In this period team sports such as football, hockey and cricket, along with athletics, proved especially popular, arguably enabling girls to transfer the teamwork of the shop-floor, restaurant or teashop to the football or hockey pitch. As Todd rightly remarks, 'paid work structured young women's access to leisure' and, indeed this was the case with Lyons service staff whose availability for leisure activity was determined by the hours they worked.⁷⁵⁰ Reduction in the coverage of women's sport in *The Lyons Mail* suggests that it was less important as a feature of industrial welfare at Lyons after the war, though sociable sporting activities, especially darts, prospered. Rising levels of affluence in the late 1950s and 1960s undoubtedly gave young working women greater independence and more access to leisure activities away from the workplace while the introduction of self-service in restaurants and computers in the payroll department led to a gradual decline in numbers of workers employed. Nevertheless, even in this period, it is possible to see the pattern of workforce initiatives being taken up and supported by management, as was the case at Raleigh, Robinsons and the Bank of England. More often the process began when individuals posted their interests and intent in *The Lyons Mail*, or on a notice board, or

⁷⁴⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/293, *The Lyons Mail*, October 1952, p. 11.

⁷⁵⁰ Todd, 'Young Women', p. 808.

spread the news by word of mouth. For instance, in 1964, a Ladies Keep-Fit class was formed when around forty members of staff came together and ‘showed an interest in toning up their muscles’.⁷⁵¹ Glucksmann has claimed that the trappings of paternalism were little in evidence at Lyons.⁷⁵² To some extent this was mitigated by the management’s interest in promoting health and fitness in the interests of efficiency. This dictated major investment at Sudbury Hill and elsewhere and more modest facilitation of shop-floor initiatives, very much the pattern we have already encountered in other case studies.

Men’s Sport at Lyons

At the start of the 1920s there were around 3,000 waitresses employed by Lyons.⁷⁵³ The nippy was the most recognisable representative of Lyons workforce and much of the firm’s promotional advertising was centred on this iconic figure. A racehorse, a railway engine, a rose and a musical comedy were all named after her. There were, however, a considerable number of men employed at Lyons, especially in the larger establishments. Catering and hospitality on a large scale generated service-sector jobs for men as well as for women. Each hotel had an army of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers - waiters, waiter aides, superintendents, butlers, cocktail butlers, chefs, cooks, porters, platemen, receptionists, cellarmen, counter hands, barmen, clerks and storemen.⁷⁵⁴ This was before the men employed in the various Lyons food processing factories or those with roles in distribution

⁷⁵¹ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, February 1964, p. 16.

⁷⁵² Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p. 131.

⁷⁵³ LMA, ACC/3527/307, *The Lyons Mail Centenary Edition*, p. 8.

⁷⁵⁴ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, pp. 76-8, 91.

and transport were taken into account. In covering men's sport, *The Lyons Mail* reiterated the themes which appeared in its coverage of women's sport, though generally in a less patronising fashion. It was especially anxious to promote the idea of 'team work' and the front cover of the January 1920 issue made important links between sport and work in this respect. Answering its own question, 'What is team work?', the *Mail* referred to 'the development of the ideal of unselfishness' before going on to remind readers that:

[in] a football team, or a simple game of cards; success goes to those who, while being proficient, work in unison with the people whose interests are co-incident and, forgetting immediate personal advantage, shape their actions towards helping their co-workers, their team-mates or their partner at the card table.⁷⁵⁵

The 'Alfred Salmon Trophy', presented by one of the company's directors in 1924 and competed for on an annual basis, also indicates the company's pre-occupation with encouraging team work within its various departments via sport. It provided a structure for inter-departmental competition all the year round with teams being awarded points on a cumulative basis for bowls, relay races, tug-of-war, cricket, football and swimming.⁷⁵⁶ In this it is possible to see what Heller has described as the construction of corporate cultures and normative structures through the articulation of sporting values.⁷⁵⁷ It also helps to explain why men's team sports, especially football, were such an important feature of the sports and social side at Lyons.

⁷⁵⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/270, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1920, front cover.

⁷⁵⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/274, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1924, p. 53.

⁷⁵⁷ Heller, 'London Clerks', 590.

Not surprisingly football proved to be the dominant male winter team sport across all sectors of Lyons operations. Football had by the 1920s already established itself as the most popular sporting activity for working-class men in London and Porter has helpfully noted that works-based clubs were proliferating before the First World War. 'Work brought young men together, facilitating club formation', especially where this was encouraged by employers.⁷⁵⁸ Lyons was a big enough organisation to support a departmental league which consisted of teams such as Night Despatch, Bakery, Stables and Shops; while interest in playing football at the Regent and the Trocadero (and briefly the Strand Palace) was strong enough to support separate teams in the Catering Trade Football League, where opponents included the Grosvenor, Carlton and Ritz, and the 'Hotel Review Cup'.⁷⁵⁹ Indeed the strength of football at Lyons was such that Lyons Club, after playing in the West London Works League (1919-20) and the West London Sports League (1920-24), were able to compete in one of London's senior amateur leagues, the Spartan League, from 1924-25.⁷⁶⁰ Thus men's football served two purposes at Lyons; it helped to cement primary loyalties and encourage team work among those working in the same department; at the same time competing against teams from other firms or in significant competitions – Lyons Club won the London Intermediate Cup in 1925 – encouraged positive identification with the firm.

If football was primarily a working-class sport, rugby union - especially in London and the South-east – was primarily a middle-class sport. Though it is impossible to

⁷⁵⁸ D. Porter, "'Coming on with Leaps and Bounds in the Metropolis": London Football in the Era of the 1908 Olympics', *The London Journal*, 34(2), (2009), 113.

⁷⁵⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1921, p. 281; LMA, ACC/3527/274, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1924, p. 81.

⁷⁶⁰ See M. Wilson, *The Spartan Football League*, vol. 1, 1907-1930 (author, Erith, nd), p.75.

determine the social class or even the occupational background of the men who played for Lyons rugby club, formed in 1923, the club's fixture list – with opponents such as Westminster College, St Mark's College (Both teacher training institutions) and King's College – suggested that it was embedded in London rugby's almost exclusively middle-class world.⁷⁶¹ Reports of its activities in *The Lyons Mail* often lapsed into public-school slang referred familiarly to 'Rugger'.⁷⁶² It is significant that the secretary of the rugby section at Lyons worked in the laboratories, indicating the likelihood of a professional occupation. His notes for January 1926 are interesting in that they hint at the expansion of the rugby union game in the post-war period; 'a number of the larger industrial concerns have entered the field', he reports, before predicting optimistically the emergence of 'a Business Houses combination in Rugger'.⁷⁶³ This was not an unreasonable expectation given the well-publicised 'drift to rugby', especially in the grammar schools, after the First World War.⁷⁶⁴ In the narrower context of works sport, the example of rugby at Lyons reinforces the idea that the 'bottom-up' process generally prevailed in the formation of sports clubs and that this could operate at various levels of the occupational ladder. This is consistent with clubs and societies previously examined in the manufacturing and service sectors.

As Heller has importantly demonstrated company magazines were essential in order to cater for the ever-increasing number of sport and social clubs in large-scale firms throughout the interwar years; routine notices, fixtures, results and match reports were

⁷⁶¹ LMA, ACC/3527/274, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1924, p. 81.

⁷⁶² See M. Polley, 'The Amateur Ideal and British Sports Diplomacy 1900 – 1945', *Sport in History*, 26, (3), (2006), 460.

⁷⁶³ LMA, ACC/3527/276, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1926, p. 230.

⁷⁶⁴ See T. Collins, *A Social History of English Rugby Union* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 65-8.

consistent and regular features.⁷⁶⁵ It was one of the most important ways in which the company facilitated workers' initiatives in these areas. If the object of an industrial relations strategy was to secure a compliant and deferential workforce then it seems likely that it was only partially successful at Lyons, as the nippies strike of 1920 suggests. The General Strike of 1926 provided a more severe test for an organisation that stretched across both manufacturing and service sectors. In the aftermath of the strike, *The Lyons Mail* published an extract from the minutes of a board meeting held on 20 May, in which the directors expressed their 'deep appreciation of the services rendered to the Company during the recent Strike by the whole of the staff of all ranks'.⁷⁶⁶ Evidence used by Glucksmann, however, indicates that this may have been an exaggeration and that the production side would have come to a standstill had it not been for the loyalty of managers who 'readily exchanged their black coats for overalls'.⁷⁶⁷ Whether or not *The Lyons Mail's* coverage of the strike was simply company propaganda, it is clear that the experience did little to diminish the faith placed in sports and team competition as a means of promoting cooperation and efficiency at work. By 1927 the Lyons Club had initiated an Indoor Games Departmental League (male and female); fourteen departments covering both manufacturing and service sectors competed after working hours in events such as table tennis, dominoes, snooker and cribbage.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁵ M. Heller, 'British Company Magazines, 1878-1939: the Origins and Functions of House Journals in Large-Scale Organisations', *Media History*, 15, (2), (2009), 149.

⁷⁶⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/276, *The Lyons Mail*, May/June 1926, front cover.

⁷⁶⁷ Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p.130, citing *Fifty Years: Presentation to George William Booth Esquire, J. Lyons*

& Co. Ltd.

⁷⁶⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, November 1927, p. 176.

Though team sports tended to feature more prominently, individual sports were not neglected in *Lyons Mail* coverage. Of these, boxing featured on a regular basis reflecting its huge popularity in the interwar years when the reach of the Amateur Boxing Association extended to tournaments run by Boy Scouts, social clubs and business houses.⁷⁶⁹ At Lyons, the Annual Boxing Tournament was held at Sudbury where employees were invited to attend and support their departmental representatives. It is interesting to note that factory and catering departments were both well represented in the annual championships. In the six bouts at various weights in the 1926 finals five involved competitors from each sector. The middleweight division - a match between the Trocadero and a corner house - was the exception.⁷⁷⁰ As an event, therefore, it served to emphasise the size of the company while providing an opportunity to bring its various workers together for an annual 'night out'. However, it was not unusual for tournaments to be staged at Lyons hotels or corner houses. The cartoon reproduced on the next page relates to such an event staged in 1921 and indicates the multi-faceted benefits to staging sporting events of this kind at such venues. The in-house humour derived from such an event was clearly intended to evoke familiarity and positive identification with the workplace while, at the same time, hinting that the Lyons Corner House could provide a sporting ambience not totally dissimilar to the National Sporting Club, where boxing was regularly part of the entertainment provided for diners. Thus Lyons could use boxing to further its commercial interests while conveying an important message to its own workers about the importance of sport within the company. There were also some benefits when boxers representing Lyons attracted favourable press attention, as when F. J. Pepper won the bantam-weight division at the prestigious

⁷⁶⁹ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p. 365.

⁷⁷⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/276, *The Lyons Mail*, May/June 1926, p. 47.

Metropolitan Police Boxing Championships in 1931, or when the *Daily Herald*, a few years later, noted that Oxford Street teashop porter Jack H. Perry was 'a power to be reckoned with'.⁷⁷¹ Such publicity, like that generated by the firm's football team competing in the Spartan League, served to remind both workforce and the wider community of the leisure-time opportunities available at Lyons.



4:3: Lyons Boxing Contest 1921:

⁷⁷¹ *The Times*, 24 April 1931; LMA, ACC/3527/288, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1938, p. 209, citing the *Daily Herald*.

Source: LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail* April 1921, p.345.

A review of the sports activities covered by *The Lyons Mail* in the late 1930s indicates that a wide range of activities were on offer if male employees decided to take them up. Angling and bowls were important because – along with darts – they could appeal to workers who were too old for more active sports, such as boxing or football. An archived photograph of ‘a few old stalwarts’ of the Lyons Club Angling section, with accompanying text noting that ‘every man in it was then, and still is, a member’, helps to make the point that angling was a well-established club activity which retained some members over long periods of their working lives.⁷⁷² The Bowls Club was just beginning its outdoor season and was looking forward to its first fixture against a team from the Gas Light and Coke Company. Darts – as with women employees – appears to have been especially popular. Eighty competitors had recently taken part in a knock-out competition at the Strand Palace Hotel and the Men’s Darts League was praised for attracting a considerable number of new members to the Lyons Club.⁷⁷³ In addition to the staple team sports, such as cricket and football, reports suggested that hockey and rowing were particular strengths. The hockey section, which had a membership of about fifty, was fielding four teams in 1937-38 including a Sunday XI and a Colts XI. On the river, the men’s senior eight had recently won four trophies at the Thames Amateur Rowing Association tournament.⁷⁷⁴ Though it is impossible to measure the benefits that Lyons as a company benefited from helping to promote and sustain this activity, especially in terms of recruitment and retention of labour, the commitment to sport as part of a broad industrial welfare strategy at this time is clear. As

⁷⁷² LMA, ACC/3527/288, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1938, p. 219.

⁷⁷³ Ibid, p. 208.

⁷⁷⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/286, *The Lyons Mail*, December 1937, pp. 143-46.

Helen Jones has justifiably argued, other factors were probably more important in that respect.⁷⁷⁵ However, in encouraging its workers to make active use of their leisure time, Lyons was doing what any large company which regarded itself as progressive in the late 1930s was expected to do, especially in West London where new industries were booming. In September 1938 *The Times* published 'In Leisure Hours', an article which emphasised benefits attached to works-based physical recreation. Citing the example of the L.M.S. railway company, it noted that competition amongst staff had done 'a great deal to maintain and improve the standard of health and fitness'. This, it was argued, justified the company's decision to develop a sports ground at Headstone Lane for the benefit and well-being of the 'wages grades of all departments in the London area'.⁷⁷⁶ Lyons continuing commitment to sport has to be seen in the context of what other London employers were doing at the time.

As we have seen in the previous section on women's sport, there was a significant curtailment of activity between 1939 and 1945. Throughout the war, however, *The Lyons Mail* sought to maintain a link with employees serving in the armed forces and this often served to emphasise the importance of sport in helping defining the relationship between the company and its workforce. A message from the Wholesale Rounds Department, published by the *Mail* in 1941, is illustrative here.

HULLO FORCES ... we trust you are all well. We are constantly thinking of you ...

We have no doubt that you continue to maintain those high traditions which

⁷⁷⁵ H. Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes and Industrial Relations in Inter-War Britain', *Business History*, 25 (1), (1983), 61.

⁷⁷⁶ *The Times*, 20 September 1938. p.48.

were associated with your membership of the Wholesale Rounds. The Lyons Club Inter-Departmental trophies are in safe keeping – awaiting your return.⁷⁷⁷

As we have seen at other firms, sporting activity in wartime could often be justified if it involved raising money for a good cause. In 1941 the cricket section, which managed to field three teams – one on Saturday and two on Sundays – played a charity match against a team which included C.B. Clarke, a West Indies test player, in aid of the British Red Cross.⁷⁷⁸ The football team's involvement in the Hanwell Hospital Cup was also reported.⁷⁷⁹ Coverage in the Lyons Mail, however, suggests that wartime sports activities were very much on a reduced scale, though rifle shooting, bowls, boxing, swimming and rowing are also mentioned from time to time. However, as Robert Mackay has observed, 'there was no concealing the impoverishment of both the spectator side and the participatory side of sport under the exigencies of war'.⁷⁸⁰ This applied to sports participation at Lyons, especially as so many of its younger male employees were in uniform elsewhere.

As Mason and Reidi have underlined, during the Second World War the armed forces regarded sport very positively; it was said to promote *esprit de corps* and helped to cement relationships between the various branches of the armed services.⁷⁸¹ This faith in sport as a benign and unifying influence reinforced the arguments advanced before the war in favour

⁷⁷⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/288, *The Lyons Mail*, October 1941, p. 5.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/287, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1943, p. 8.

⁷⁸⁰ R. Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester

University Press, 2002), p. 119.

⁷⁸¹ T. Mason and E. Riedi, *Sport and the Military: The British Armed Forces 1880-1960*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.180.

of its role in industrial welfare. So by 1945, as Mackay has rightly pointed out, there was little doubt 'about the usefulness of participant sports for the armed forces as an aid to physical fitness and team spirit, and a similar case could be made in respect of the civilian population'.⁷⁸² These attitudes underpinned Lyons continuing commitment to sport. In August 1946, Lyons director Harry Salmon noted that the company had re-employed some 2,250 former employees on their return from national service, and suggested that the Lyons Club may well have been a factor in their decisions to return to employment with the company. It was, he claimed, one of the largest organizations of its kind in the world with a comprehensive range of sports and social facilities; it demonstrated that the firm was seriously interested in the 'welfare and happiness' of its staff.⁷⁸³

Thus, though Lyons - and especially its catering side - was to run into severe difficulties in the 1950s and 1960s, there was for some time a sense of continuity with the interwar period which had seen sports - men's sports in particular - become such an important aspect of company culture and this remained in evidence for some time. Within two years of the end of the war men's football at Lyons had revived and a West End League comprising six teams representing Lyons corner houses, restaurants and hotels were in membership. Section notes in *The Lyons Mail* suggested a degree of frustration that there 'are dozens of very good footballers who are active Club Members ... but who are playing for outside clubs'.⁷⁸⁴ Possibly pre-war ties had been eroded to some extent as young men formed friendships and connections unconnected to their employment at Lyons; *The Lyons Mail* here was echoing sentiments that we have already encountered, at Raleigh for

⁷⁸² Mackay, *Half the Battle*, p. 119.

⁷⁸³ *The Times*, 2 August 1946, p.10.

⁷⁸⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1947, p. 10.

example. Yet there were those who continued to devote their spare time to works football, even if their playing days were over, and they provided an important element of continuity. *The Lyons Journal*, for example, published an article by a former player who had taken up refereeing after an injury and had qualified as a Class 1 official.⁷⁸⁵ It seems that a number of Lyons Club members who had once been active participants in sport were key individuals, officiating in inter-departmental competitions and serving various clubs and teams in an organisational capacity, sometimes even after they had retired. These were key figures in ensuring the continuity of sport at Lyons over a long period, especially as they were often involved with more than one section. An article in *The Lyons Mail* in 1960 focused on Messrs Philpott, Butler and Basham, who had joined Lyons as groundsmen in 1919. Butler, who had played for the firm's football team as a young man and was now retired, reflected that 'Sudbury Hill has certainly been my life ... and still is'.⁷⁸⁶

Longevity of membership was also demonstrated - less surprisingly perhaps - in the Bowls section, given that age was no barrier to participation for most male employees and that sociability was a key factor underpinning its wide appeal. It helped that the Lyons Club offered both indoor and outdoor facilities so that bowlers could play the game in some form all the year round, either representing the Lyons Club in local or business houses leagues or their particular department in an 'ever popular' departmental league consisting of 13 teams in 1950.⁷⁸⁷ One prominent member of the Bowls section, Norman Miller, had joined the firm in 1926 and had become, as his obituary noted thirty years later, 'a very well-known and popular figure in the Company and the Lyons Club', having represented his club, his

⁷⁸⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/310, *The Lyons Journal*, September 1950, p. 6.

⁷⁸⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/297, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1960, p. 8.

⁷⁸⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1950, p. 10.

county and his country in the 1950s. A long association with a particular section was particular valued. The same issue of *The Lyons Mail* that reported the loss of Norman Miller noted that the Angling section's twenty-first annual dinner and social saw Mrs Jones, the wife of the company's chairman, present a life membership certificate, an electric clock and a badge denoting membership of the London Anglers Association to Mr W.S. Cooper in recognition of his many years of service.⁷⁸⁸ As at other companies, it was standard practice for Lyons directors or their wives to appear on such occasions to present awards. Thus in 1952, for example, it was reported that Mrs Sam Salmon had performed this duty for the Billiards and Snooker section with 'the utmost charm and efficiency' and had been presented with a bouquet of flowers.⁷⁸⁹ These occasions provided an opportunity for directors to show that they could mix with the workforce and even share their interests while, at the same time, subtly reminding Lyons Club members of who they had to thank for the facilities they enjoyed.

The Lyons Mail was keen to make employees aware of any outstanding sporting achievements by individuals with whom they could identify, or whom they might even work alongside. Thus John Jales, an electrician working at the Oxford Street Corner House and the Regent Palace Hotel, who was also a formidable athlete – during the 1950s he had amassed a total of 56 medals and a plaque – was given a full-page profile in 1960. The one-time Southern Counties Cross-Country champion provided the kind of copy that *The Lyons Mail* relished not least because he was able to explain that he had only begun running seriously after joining the Lyons Athletic Club. 'I owe everything to the club', he explained, praising in

⁷⁸⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/295, *The Lyons Mail*, December 1956, p. 15 & p.18

⁷⁸⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/293, *The Lyons Mail*, August 1952, p. 15.

particular the 'expert guidance' he had received from the coaches. He had been proud to represent the Lyons Harriers in events in Belgium and France.⁷⁹⁰ This kind of story was especially valued in company magazines it allowed readers the satisfaction of basking in a moment of reflected glory while reminding them that they worked for employers who provided the first-class facilities that made a successful international athlete possible. Moreover, these facilities were available to all who wished to take advantage of them.

The mid 1960s were something of a watershed for sport in Britain as the prevalence of the ideology of amateurism inherited from the Victorians began to fade and the idea that sport was sufficiently important to merit state support began to take hold. Sport, argued Harold Wilson, was 'essential to Britain's economic and social development'. It had not, he added, 'been given adequate priority in the past'.⁷⁹¹ As we have seen, though this may have applied to governments, it was an accusation which many large companies could refute and Lyons was no exception. Even as the company entered difficult times, sport helped Lyons to put on an impressive show and to generate positive publicity for both internal and external consumption. Football, still the dominant winter sport for men, provided *The Lyons Mail* with numerous opportunities to celebrate. The team from the Regent Palace Hotel won both the Catering Trade Football League and the Catering Trades Junior Charity Cup in 1966, beating the Royal Gardens Hotel 5-1 in the final, held at Highbury, home of Arsenal FC. Seven of its players were picked to play for a representative team against their French

⁷⁹⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/297, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1960, p. 9.

⁷⁹¹ D. Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, (London; Little Brown, 2006), pp. 306-307; see also K. Jefferys, *Sport and Politics in Modern Britain: the Road to 2012* ((Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.77-8.

counterparts in a catering trade 'international'.⁷⁹² Sport organised on a departmental basis remained a prominent and characteristic feature of works-based recreation at Lyons and sometimes served the firm's purposes particularly well. At the bakery in 1967, after a new range of sponge cakes ('Souflettes') had been launched, workers joined together to form the 'footballing Souflettes' who were 'currently proving as successful as the sponge cakes they sell'.⁷⁹³ A shop-floor initiative which identified so strongly with the firm and one of its products was certain to be favourably regarded and encouraged by employers. At Henry Telfer's in Birmingham, a Lyons subsidiary, the 'Telfer Tornados' ten-pin bowling team generated a similarly favourable response; they had proved 'as efficient and accurate at delivering bowls as they are the company's daily output of sausages, pies and meat products'.⁷⁹⁴ Ten-pin bowling in the 1960s – along with the introduction of squash – is indicative of adaptation and innovation in works-based sport at Lyons as activities moved in and out of fashion. 'Badminton is booming', proclaimed *The Lyons Mail* in 1967 reporting that a Lyons team had resumed league competition after an absence of twenty years; membership had increased from fifty to seventy in only a year whereas previously the section had been 'in the doldrums through lack of support'. Swimming, however, the longest-established activity at Lyons, was in decline by the end of our period.⁷⁹⁵

To conclude this section, sport at Lyons served many purposes but one of its most important was to provide opportunities when workers could be brought together. This was particularly important for a company which employed staff in diverse locations – offices,

⁷⁹² LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1966, p. 11.

⁷⁹³ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1967, p. 11.

⁷⁹⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1966, p. 11.

⁷⁹⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, November 1967, p. 11.

factories, teashops, restaurants and hotels – widely spread across the capital and with significant outposts in the provinces. Working hours were not always conducive to participation. It was noted with regret in 1963 that the rugby club could not always rely on the services of Bill Campbell - ‘the best scrum-half we have had for years’ – whose duties at the Cumberland Hotel only allowed him to play every other match. ‘This is a tragedy indeed’ the section notes concluded.⁷⁹⁶ Moreover, just as Roehampton had been inaccessible for many employees at the Bank of England, Sudbury was an inconvenient venue for some Lyons staff.⁷⁹⁷ Thus occasions when such logistical problems were overcome were to be celebrated as when a seven-a-side tournament held at Sudbury in 1963 was judged to have been a great success, even though two of the sixteen teams entered had to scratch. The fact that a team from the English Electric-Leo factory travelled from Staffordshire to take part was especially noteworthy. Sports events of this kind enabled Lyons to link the disparate parts of its far-flung operations and give its workforce an opportunity to discover what they had in common.⁷⁹⁸

In the 1950s, when Lyons’ catering and production operations were still operating at their pre-war levels the annual Lyons Club Sports Carnival fulfilled the function of bringing workers from different departments together on a grand scale and provided an occasion when they – and their families – could identify positively with their employer. In 1950, for example, when the Lyons Club claimed to have 20,000 members, around 30,000 Lyons employees and members of their families attended the event at Sudbury. Thirty-three events featured inter-departmental competition straddling both manufacturing and service

⁷⁹⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/293, *The Lyons Mail*, Christmas 1952, p. 15.

⁷⁹⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1967, p. 10.

⁷⁹⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/99, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1964, p. 14.

departments. It was a lavish affair, the equivalent of 'Founder's Day' at Lever Brothers, and serving much the same purpose.⁷⁹⁹ It was the day when Lyons most resembled a family. Ron Smith, who went on to work for Lyons later and also where both his mother and pal worked, remembered how as a boy 'the annual sports day was eagerly looked forward to' and that he had learnt to play snooker in the club house at Sudbury.⁸⁰⁰ The event also served to advertise the size and strength of the Lyons organisation to the outside world; it was meant to impress – and it did, at least in terms of press coverage. Surviving cuttings in the Lyons archive indicate that the event was covered in some local newspapers (*Kensington News*, *West London Observer*), in London evening newspapers (*The Star*, *Evening Standard*) as well as in national titles (*Sporting Chronicle* and the *Sunday Despatch*), and as far afield as the *Nottingham Evening News*.⁸⁰¹ Thus, in addition to building morale and helping workers to identify positively with the firm it also advertised the fact that Lyons was a major employer with progressive attitudes to industrial welfare and a commitment to company sport.

Aspects of Social Recreation & Leisure c.1918 - 1945

As we have seen at Raleigh, Robinsons and the Bank of England, sport was only half the story; less than half for many workers. Its reach was limited. Men were more likely to participate in sport than women; younger workers – especially those without family

⁷⁹⁹ Griffiths, 'Give my Regards to Uncle Billy', p. 32.

⁸⁰⁰ Recollections of Lyons Staff, Online Lyons History, www.kzwp.com/lyons, This online history provides a short history of the firm, former employees talk of their experiences at work and photographs of sports and social clubs.(accessed 15 March 2013).

⁸⁰¹ LMA, ACC/3527/207, Press Cuttings, J. Lyons & Co.

responsibilities – were more likely to participate than older workers. It is important, therefore, to locate sport within a wider framework of discussion which acknowledges the role of non-sporting recreational activities in industrial welfare strategies. Much of this has been hidden in the sense that it did not attract headlines in the way that sport could and did not generate occasions which could enhance the prestige of a firm through winning a trophy, for example. Thus the social side of recreational welfare in both manufacturing and service sectors has suffered from neglect, at least when compared with sport. An article entitled ‘The Social Side’ in *The Lyons Mail* of September 1919 made the point succinctly:

In spite of the fact that present inclinations are towards outdoor recreation, now is the time to begin to formulate plans for the social side of the “Lyons’ Club.”

This phase of its activities has not been given the same prominence, in the past, as the athletic side, but there is no reason why this should be so.⁸⁰²

The following section then will take into account the various activities that constituted the social side of works-based recreational provision at Lyons across the period. These activities ranged from works outings and dances to beauty contests and charity events, and included the routine meetings of clubs and societies devoted to special interests such as music, amateur dramatics and horticulture. The recreational life of the Lyons nippy in the interwar period is given particular attention. Recreational provision at Lyons post-1945 is covered in a separate section. Rex Pope’s original research has noted that the growing numbers working in hotels and mass catering reflected the growing economic importance of the service

⁸⁰² LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, September 1919, p. 11.

sector.⁸⁰³ It could be argued, therefore, that recreational activities at Lyons and other service sector firms and organisations merit attention as one of the ways in which managers sought to encourage worker cohesion and the diffusion of company culture in a critical period when the British economy was being reshaped.

In achieving these ends Lyons, like other major employers, appear to have been aware of the great attraction of dancing as a way of bringing workers together socially. If a dance was in aid of a charity there was an additional reason to buy a ticket and attend. Sometimes, as with the 'Cinderella Dance' in aid of the West London Hospital War Memorial Fund at the Lime Grove Baths in 1919, an event was organised with a view to attracting dancers from all departments. Around 600 staff – along with 300 friends – attended and 'showed their enthusiasm' for a good cause by raising £76. Prizes for fancy dress were presented by Mr Alfred Salmon, thus signifying the management's approval.⁸⁰⁴ A few months later Lyons' 'smaller restaurants' (Birkbeck, Blenheim, Ludgate Hill, Throgmorton and Victoria Mansions) combined to organise a 'Fancy Dress Carnival' for around 500 people.⁸⁰⁵ Fancy dress events appear to have been in vogue in the 1920s. At Christmas 1924, Selfridge's on Oxford Street was advertising 'hundreds of dresses – many quite original - ... very suitable for the fancy dress dances and balls which occur at this time of year'.⁸⁰⁶ At Lyons, as at other workplaces where workers took the initiative in this area, there was a tendency for social activities to follow popular trends.

⁸⁰³ R. Pope, 'A Consumer Service in Interwar Britain: The Hotel Trade, 1924-1938', *Business History Review*, 74, (4), (2000), 659-60.

⁸⁰⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/270, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1920, p. 99.

⁸⁰⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1921, p.285.

⁸⁰⁶ *The Times*, 18 December 1924, p.11.

Simon Phillips has helpfully noted in his work on Boots Pure Drug Company during the inter-war years that some workers considered that dances were the major features in their social calendar. Further suggesting that dances were important in the overall life of the company.⁸⁰⁷ Facilitating such events, not least through advertisements on notice-boards and publicity in company magazines, were ways in which the company could be seen to be responding to the enthusiasm of employees keen not to miss out on the latest dance craze. When a dance was organised for Lyons shop and restaurant workers at the Masonic Hall, Camberwell, in February 1921, it merited a few lines in *The Lyons Mail* alongside fancy dress balls and other events that could be gathered together under the sub-heading 'Social'.⁸⁰⁸ The Lyons Club organised regular dances on Sunday at the pavilion at Sudbury and these proved so popular with locals that Lyons' staff were sometimes unable to get into their own club. There were complaints in 1924 regarding the detrimental impact of more than a hundred 'visitors' swamping the pavilion and an element of control was introduced to deal with this problem with those requiring visitor's tickets required to apply through their departmental delegates or managers in advance of the event.⁸⁰⁹ This minor problem seems to underline the appeal of dancing as an activity which was attractive because it was both sociable and spontaneous. For these reasons dancing was often incorporated into other activities, such as works outings, which at Lyons were usually organised on a departmental basis as a mass exodus of workers for a day out, as at Raleigh or Robinsons, would have been impractical. Thus, when a party of 250 workers from the bakery department and their

⁸⁰⁷ S. Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at Boots Pure Drug Company 1883 – 1945', (PhD. Thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2003), p.240.

⁸⁰⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail*, March 1921, p. 285.

⁸⁰⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/274, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1924, p. 25.

guests went to Eastbourne for a day out by the sea, dancing inevitably featured. On boarding the train each member was handed a 'pocket lunch' and some of the party 'gaily decorated the train with coloured streamers'. After enjoying the day the party came together for speeches of appreciation, games and dancing.⁸¹⁰ There were variations on this theme. When the Coventry Street Corner House had a day out on the Thames, travelling by boat from Chiswick to Chertsey, the outing concluded with an impromptu sports meeting.⁸¹¹

As we have seen dances and outings of various kinds were a mainstay of social recreation across both manufacturing and service sectors and this was the case at Lyons. Such occasions offered something to look forward to, an escape from the day-to-day routine of work and an opportunity to socialise with colleagues. In as far as Lyons was the provider of such events they were designed to encourage workers to regard their employer in a positive way. They also may have had the effect of enhancing loyalty to the firm indirectly through helping workers to bond more closely with departmental colleagues. Miriam Glucksmann has emphasised how loyalty was an important theme in Lyons' company literature along with 'high morale', which the firm considered boosted production.⁸¹²

The extent to which collective singing was a feature of industrial life in the interwar period should not be underestimated. Robertson, Korczynski and Pickering have found evidence to suggest that collective singing remained a feature of factory life in the interwar period. It seems unlikely that workers at Lyons would have been any different to those at

⁸¹⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/275, *The Lyons Mail*, August 1925, p. 108.

⁸¹¹ LMA, ACC/3527/279, *The Lyons Mail*, September 1929, p. 111.

⁸¹² Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, pp. 130-31.

Cadburys or Rowntrees, singing together as they carried out repetitive, production line tasks at Cadby Hall or Greenford. It was an obvious way of helping the time to pass more quickly.⁸¹³ Of all Lyons' workers, waitresses in the corner houses were exposed to music most often, though the experience was not necessarily soothing. West End corner houses could incorporate as many as nine restaurants over four or five floors, each with its own band or ensemble. This could be frustrating for nippies dependent on gratuities to top up their low basic wages as it encouraged customers to 'make a day of it at Lyons', lingering all afternoon over a sixpenny pot of tea while listening to the orchestra.⁸¹⁴ This negative experience did not preclude the emergence of a choral society just after the First World War. Section notes in 1921 reported that it was recruiting a steady stream of new members and that average attendances at practice were between eighty and ninety though more men were needed.⁸¹⁵ Though the Choral Society did not please more discerning critics – *The Times* described its singing as 'poor' and its concerts were not well supported - this did not necessarily invalidate a spare-time activity undertaken by Lyons' staff for their own enjoyment.⁸¹⁶ From the company's point of view the choir, of all the non-sports recreational activities, was the one which most obviously relied on team work, a quality on which it placed the highest value.

⁸¹³ E. Robertson, M. Korczynski and M. Pickering, 'Harmonious Relations? Music at Work in the Rowntree and Cadbury Factories', *Business History*, 49 (2), (2007), 219.

⁸¹⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/309, *The Lyons Mail Centenary Edition, 1894 – 1994*, p. 6; J. R. Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 207.

⁸¹⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1921, p. 349.

⁸¹⁶ *The Times*, 24 May 1922, p.12.

Other recreational societies operating under the umbrella of the Lyons Club in this period offered workers opportunities to pursue particular interests or hobbies. A Photographic Society emerged, initially proposed by an employee in the accounts department, which advertised its existence and sought new members via an article in *The Lyons Mail*. One of the benefits, it was suggested, was that it would help to provide a link between Lyons staff in London and colleagues working for Lyons in the provinces who shared an interest in photography.⁸¹⁷ The Lyons Radio Club offered similar opportunities for employees enthused by the possibilities of the new medium, though it seems likely that membership consisted of a relatively small group of enthusiasts. Radio Club section notes in 1927 urged members to canvass work colleagues in an effort to increase numbers. There were, however, distinct advantages in clubbing together, not least that it was possible to negotiate discounts for members with local suppliers of radio sets and radio equipment.⁸¹⁸ Thus, in a more modest way, the Radio Club at Lyons showed the same kind of initiative as the Angling Club at Raleigh which negotiated similar deals with local tackle shops.

The Lyons Mail also reported the existence of a Debating Society which held its first meeting in March 1921 with Mr. I Salmon in the chair. The proposition which supplied the subject of its first debate was highly topical: 'That in the opinion of the House the cinema is a greater and more beneficial national influence than the theatre'.⁸¹⁹ It was a topic well chosen to attract an audience. Cinemas were opening at a rapid rate and outnumbered theatres and music halls in London even in 1921. Moreover, there was much contemporary criticism of the films shown which were regarded by conservative cultural critics as a vulgar

⁸¹⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/270, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1920, p. 255.

⁸¹⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, January 1927, p. 221.

⁸¹⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/268, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1921, p. 416.

import from the USA which would debase cultural standards in Britain.⁸²⁰ In parallel with developments at the Bank of England, the Debating Society at Lyons broadened its remit to become the Literary and Debating Society by the mid-1920s, possibly in an attempt to attract more members. What is noticeable here is that members of the Lyons board of directors were involved from the start. Salmon had chaired the first meeting and the programme for 1925 included a lecture by Mr S. I. Gluckstein on 'Mediterranean Travels'. The relevant section notes concluded: 'we are under a debt of gratitude to Mr. Gluckstein for finding in the midst of his busy political and professional life the time to pay us a visit'.⁸²¹ Perhaps the deference that was almost inevitable when directors were in attendance stifled the prospect of lively debate though it seems likely, in any case, that this particular society would have a fairly limited appeal.

Peter Bird has helpfully calculated that there were 3,000 waitresses employed in Lyons teashops by 1925.⁸²² Though we should not underestimate them - in 1930 a group of thirteen nippies ventured on their first foreign holiday as a result of attending lectures - it seems unlikely that activities such as the Choral Society, the Photographic Society, the Radio Club, not to mention the Literary and Debating Society would have attracted waitresses in any great numbers.⁸²³ Given their significant highly-publicised role as the public face of the company it is important to review the way in which the social side of industrial welfare provision supplied opportunities for the Lyons' nippies.

⁸²⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1921, p. 417; M. Pugh, *We Danced all Night: a Social History of Britain Between the Wars*, (London: Vintage, 2008), pp. 231, 340.

⁸²¹ LMA, ACC/3527/276, *The Lyons Mail*, February 1926, p. 269.

⁸²² Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 119.

⁸²³ LMA, ACC/3527/280, *The Lyons Mail*, October 1930, p. 140.

Though, as we have seen, nippies sometimes featured in *The Lyons Mail* coverage of sporting events, the numbers participating appear to have represented a very small proportion of the total number of waitresses employed by Lyons at any one time. This made the social side of 'sports and social' provision even more important but there appears to have been little attempt to engage systematically with the nippies in this respect, though they were no doubt glad to avail themselves of staff outings and fancy dress dances when the occasion arose, provided, of course, that they were not working. Ironically, the idea of the Lyons nippy emerged in the mid-1920s when the Gluckstein family, in its efforts to modernise mass catering and banish any hint of servility, supplied Lyons restaurant waitresses with a new uniform designed to ensure that they presented themselves as the 'embodiment of restrained modern femininity'.⁸²⁴ 'Nippy', connoting speedy and efficient service, was adopted after a competition among Lyons employees to find a new name.⁸²⁵ As an exercise in rebranding and a nod in the direction of modernity it was a success; it seemed to capture the public's imagination. A *Times* reporter at the Masonic Million Memorial Festival held at Olympia in August 1925, where five miles of tables were serviced by 1,300 uniformed nippies, described them as 'darting to and fro like a myriad black and white butterflies'.⁸²⁶

Selina Todd has argued that the interwar years saw a marked increase in financial and social independence among young working-class women who thereby achieved greater access to leisure opportunities than before.⁸²⁷ This is not especially

⁸²⁴ Walkowitz, *Nights Out*, p. 183.

⁸²⁵ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 114.

⁸²⁶ *The Times*, 13 August 1925, p.15.

⁸²⁷ Todd, 'Young Women', 791.

evident in relation to the nippies at Lyons where lines between work and leisure appear to have been blurred. There was some satisfaction for the Outdoor Catering Team of forty waitresses who serviced the diners at Ascot races in 1920 and *The Lyons Mail* was determined to give the occasion a positive spin. 'Ascot is said to be the greatest annual exhibition of English beauty', ran the caption accompanying a photograph of the team. 'A few people also go there by train to see some horses galloping around a racecourse', it added.⁸²⁸ That the event involved work was veiled by these patronising comments. Similarly, in April 1921, the *Mail* reported a series of tea parties, sponsored by the *Daily Mirror* and held at the Strand Corner House, where 1,500 London children had been served and entertained by Lyons staff. Photographs reveal waitresses – they had yet to acquire their new title – as pivotal figures in the merriment; their work was to serve while helping to create a party atmosphere.⁸²⁹ Again, the line between work and pleasure was blurred in the reporting. This tendency was still present in the 1930s; a Circus Fans' Association Supper in 1935 witnessed waitresses dressed as clowns, 'both amusing and serving the guests'.⁸³⁰

We have already seen that set-piece events – works outings and Christmas Balls – had an important symbolic significance in terms of industrial welfare. At Lyons they were particularly important as they provided rare occasions when groups of workers from the company's many retail outlets, teashops, restaurants and hotels, could be acknowledged collectively. As a mass caterer, Lyons was accustomed to staging large-scale events which were designed to impress. Thus an event such as the Lyons Olympic Parade of 1933 where

⁸²⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/270, *The Lyons Mail*, August 1920, p. 471.

⁸²⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/271, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1921, p. 351.

⁸³⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/286, *The Lyons Mail*, February 1935, p. 203.

awards – including medals won by waitresses in connection with the Teashops Annual Efficiency Scheme – were presented by guest of honour Lord Lonsdale.⁸³¹ As far as the nippies were concerned, however, the ‘Teashops’ Annual Big Bang Carnival’, first staged in 1922 and held at the Hammersmith *Palais de Danse*, was the event of the year. By 1937 it had become something of a tradition but the fact that it was being held in Coronation year provided the occasion for a degree of innovation. Hundreds of nippies attended wearing appropriately-themed fancy dress ‘in Royal Homage’, as *The Lyons Mail* reported.⁸³² After 1,500 people had enjoyed an evening of frivolity and dancing at the company’s expense the Carnival concluded with members of the Gluckstein and Salmon families praising the efforts of their loyal and industrious worker and presenting prizes. It was in every sense a top-down occasion. As *The Times* explained, the carnival was an ‘annual event given by J. Lyons to its staff of waitresses’.⁸³³ It was a fairly obvious way of ensuring that employees would look at their employers – who appeared to have spared no expense to give them a night out to remember – in a favourable light while, at the same time, symbolically underpinning the *status quo* at Lyons. The press coverage generated by such an event was also welcome.

Lyons appears to have been generally successful in ensuring that the nippies generated favourable publicity. In 1939, a *Picture Post* feature entitled ‘Nippy: The Story of her day ... How she lives ... How she spends her spare time’ succeeded in making the job seem glamorous. The working day of a ‘Corner House Nippy’ – one among 7,600 working for Lyons - was recorded in a sequence of beautifully shot photographs. In a good week, it

⁸³¹ LMA, ACC/3527/283, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1933, p. 30.

⁸³² LMA, ACC/3527/287, *The Lyons Mail*, February 1937, p. 189.

⁸³³ *The Times*, 19 January 1937, p.10.

was reported, she could earn 25s with a further 25s in tips.⁸³⁴ The reality may have been very different for most nippies; who were subject to a regime supervised for the firm by Miss Bacon, a disciplinarian who expected obedience and 'didn't suffer fools gladly'.⁸³⁵ Moreover, as Judith Walkowitz has convincingly argued, wages were low, especially when deductions for uniforms and other items were taken into account, and tips were an unreliable source of income, varying from location to location and shift to shift.⁸³⁶ Though *Picture Post* acknowledged the excellent sports and social facilities on offer at Lyons, it failed to point out the difficulties which many West End nippies would have experienced in trying to access them in faraway Sudbury Hill. This is not to say that there was not an element of glamour attached to the job. The allure of the West End was sufficient to attract many potential nippies to Lyons; for some proximity to Soho with its 'shady nightclubs, famous for their hot jazz, social masquerades, and cultures of risk' was hard to resist and made working for Lyons attractive. However, the fact that between 800 and 900 nippies married each year may have been even more important.⁸³⁷

Social Recreation at Lyons, 1945 – c.1970

Post war London was left with what Jerry White has termed 'desolation on a Pompeian scale' as the city's infrastructure revealed the scars of wartime bombing. Moreover, tight building control of commercial building and repairs up until the 1950s impacted greatly on the City and the West End, where damage to offices, warehouses and shops had been most

⁸³⁴ *Picture Post*, 4 March 1939, p.29.

⁸³⁵ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 46.

⁸³⁶ Walkowitz, *Nights Out*, p. 205.

⁸³⁷ Walkowitz, *Nights Out*, p. 208; *Picture Post*, 4 March 1939, pp.29-35.

severe.⁸³⁸ These problems impacted on Lyons' teashop and restaurant business in the short term though, in the medium and longer term, it was conditions generated by the end of austerity and the coming of affluence in the 1950s and 1960s that sent Lyons into decline. In the short run there was an understandable determination to re-establish a connection with pre-war custom and practice. The 'Social' section of *The Lyons Mail* in the late 1940s and 1950s continued its pre-war practice of notifying workers of forthcoming meetings, outings, concerts, dances and other social events. The particular requirements of nippies were acknowledged in a new regular feature entitled 'Teashop News'. It seemed that those who had been active in pre-war recreational activities were keen to show that they could rekindle their pre-war commitment; 'it will be seen that the "Teashops" are once again active and organised and eager to be of great assistance to all sections of the Lyons Club'. After visiting the BBC to see a live broadcast of 'Those were the Days' a group of teashop workers decided 'there and then' to form an Old- Time Dance Club under the umbrella of the Lyons Club.⁸³⁹ It was another example of an employee initiative in the recreational sphere, facilitated by structures put in place by the employer and demonstrated that the pre-war machinery of industrial welfare continued to function.

Activities which involved teamwork, as we have seen, were highly valued; in this respect, putting on a play or a show developed a similar set of transferable skills to those found in team sports. The fact that Lyons workers were so widely dispersed meant that initiatives in this area tended to be based in particular departments or sections. In 1951 the entire third floor of the Coventry Street Corner House was made available for a variety show

⁸³⁸ J. White, *London in the Twentieth Century: a City and its People* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), pp.42-3.

⁸³⁹ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, May 1947, p. 7.

entitled 'Coventry Capers'; all but two of the various acts were provided by employees. They included comedians, a dance group, illusionists, an Al Jolson impersonator, a mute Danny Kaye, a singing doctor and a ventriloquist. BBC pianist Bernard Bowen was brought in to accompany the 'turns'.⁸⁴⁰ Though it was about to be eclipsed by the arrival of television 'Variety', in the early 1950s, remained a popular form of entertainment; in particular, its humour, as David Kynaston has observed, it 'still spoke to its [mainly working-class] audience'.⁸⁴¹ In effect the 'Coventry Capers' was indicative of wider public taste and was merely replicating a formula that provided a sense of escapism for workers engaged in sometimes menial and repetitive work. The fact that it was reported in *The Lyons Mail* signified official approval of this morale-raising enterprise. It seems likely that the Teashops Dramatic Section production of Somerset Maugham's 'Loaves and Fishes' at the Conway Hall, Bloomsbury, in 1952, (tickets 2/6 and 3/6 available from the Teashops Social Section) was viewed in the same light.⁸⁴²

Other clubs and societies, as in the pre-war era, were built around the individual interests of enthusiasts – amateur photographers, chess players, stamp collectors and, increasingly in the post-war period, gardeners. The Photographic Society met on the first Tuesday each month and had a seriously educational agenda. It offered classes for beginners, expert guidance, lectures and visits – for example, to the Ilford (film) works – and joint meetings with other photographic societies. 'Friendly relations' had been forged with the Post Office Savings Bank Photographic Society where a lecture on 'Print Quality' was the

⁸⁴⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, Christmas 1951, p. 15.

⁸⁴¹ Kynaston, *Family Britain*, p. 208.

⁸⁴² LMA, ACC/3527/293, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1952, p. 10.

upcoming attraction.⁸⁴³ The activities of the Chess Section and the Stamp Circle were similarly cerebral and unlikely to have the same breadth of appeal as 'Coventry Papers' or even 'Loaves and Fishes'. The Chess Section had a disappointing season over 1950-1951; it had recently lost some key players whose absence weakened the team. It could, however, boast a player of whom the company and fellow workers could be proud in Mr Ogbourne of the Oxford Street Corner House, who had won the Lyons championship for two years in succession and the London Commercial Chess League's Mark Abrahams Cup.⁸⁴⁴ Stamp Circle activities mirrored those of philatelists elsewhere. For the annual competition members were required to enter twelve stamps on a theme of their own choice; the joint winners ('Lions of Europe' and 'Products of the Empire'), both received prizes of stamps. The section notes concluded with a hint of what was to come over the new season 'as a temptation to come along and join the fun'.⁸⁴⁵

It has been argued that, even in 1945, there was a marked distinction between different regions of England and Wales as to the proportion of households with cultivated gardens. For example, 75 per cent of gardens in the South East were cultivated compared with only 11 per cent in the North West.⁸⁴⁶ This may help to explain the popularity of the Horticultural section at Lyons and why it features so often in *The Lyons Mail* in the period through to 1970. Horticulture provided an opportunity to socialise and talk about flowers and plants with work colleagues before returning home to cultivate one's own garden or allotment. In this way it dovetailed perfectly with the way employees lived in the 1950s and

⁸⁴³ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1949, p. 10.

⁸⁴⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/293, *The Lyon Mail*, July 1951, p. 23.

⁸⁴⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/293, *The Lyons Mail*, June 1952, p. 13.

⁸⁴⁶ J. A. Patmore, *Land and Leisure*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 36.

1960s where more people were likely to have their own home (either bought on mortgage or rented from a local authority) and garden. Shows provided a competitive edge which many found attractive. Moreover, it is clear that for many, gardening was probably their most important spare-time leisure activity. A Mass Observation survey in 1957 revealed that 23 per cent of Britain's ten million or so gardeners spent 10 hours a week working on their treasured plot of land.⁸⁴⁷ Shows provided a competitive incentive which some appreciated; they also – if the weather was kind – provided a pleasant afternoon out in the sun in the congenial company of fellow Lyons horticulturalists. *The Lyons Mail* signalled approval of activities that brought workers from all departments together. Thus the Dahlia and Chrysanthemum Show of 1948, held in the pavilion at Sudbury Hill, was judged a success despite a disappointing turnout; only sixty entries had been received which was not indicative of section membership. Nevertheless, a senior member of the Federation of Middlesex Horticultural Societies was on hand to judge the show, commenting on the good quality of exhibits on display in all 14 classes. The tea department were particularly successful.⁸⁴⁸ Gardening and Horticultural Clubs across both manufacturing and service sectors flourished because they appealed to men and women and middle-aged and even quite elderly employees; moreover they reflected a powerful trend in the 1950s and 1960s for people to spend more of their leisure time at home. A government survey in 1969 revealed that 52 per cent of leisure time for men and 57 per cent for women was spent on home-based activities.⁸⁴⁹ By the mid-1950s the Horticultural section at Lyons was well

⁸⁴⁷ S. Constantine, 'Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Journal of Social History*, 14(3), (1981), 387.

⁸⁴⁸ LMA, ACC/3527/300, *The Lyons Mail*, December 1948, p. 7.

⁸⁴⁹ Constantine, 'Amateur Gardening', 401.

established. Its 1956 Autumn Show was adjudged 'a brilliant success'. It had attracted a record number of entries and had included a children's section. Amongst the winning entries was Mr. R. Samuel from the laboratories for his dahlias, Mr. A. Swadling (Press Department) for his chrysanthemum and Miss Slawson (accounts) and C. Chaplin (works) were also successful entrants in other categories.⁸⁵⁰ This was an important development echoing an increasing emphasis on the family that was becoming evident in company literature.

During the 1960s Lyons was forced to confront the challenges of increased competition and changing public taste. The company showed that it had the capacity to innovate, opening Britain's first carvery restaurant in 1960, the Aerial Hotel at Heathrow in 1961 and its first Jolyon restaurant in 1970. However, the closure of its flagship West End restaurants – the Trocadero in 1965 and the Street Corner House in 1967 - along with the steady decline of the teashop business, were more reliable indicators of the crisis that was enveloping the company.⁸⁵¹ London was being proclaimed in the *Time* magazine in 1966 as the world city of the decade but Lyons seemed increasingly dated and backward-looking.⁸⁵² A series of features in the house magazine inadvertently reflected this dilemma. Images of clubs and sections from the interwar period revealed a number of staff who still worked for the firm some thirty years later.⁸⁵³ It was something to celebrate but it was not enough.

⁸⁵⁰ LMA, ACC/3527/295, *The Lyons Mail*, December 1956, p. 15.

⁸⁵¹ Bird, *The First Food Empire*, p. 187.

⁸⁵² R. Porter, *London: A Social History*, (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 341.

⁸⁵³ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1964, p. 2.

The Lyons Mail, appearing in a new newspaper-style format from the 1960s continued to faithfully reflect on the various recreational activities of Lyons' employees, 'The Social Side' reporting events that would have been familiar to their predecessors in the 1930s. A social evening organised by the catering department could still attract 280 guests, a respectable number. There had been a departmental outing by coach to Central London to take in 'The Black and White Minstrel Show' (as seen on television) with dinner to follow. A dance had been organised at Sudbury with Freddy Randall's Band, 'well known' for its recordings and appearances on the BBC's Light Programme's 'Easy Beat'.⁸⁵⁴ Freddy's fame could be traced back to the start of the 1950s and his band would regularly feature on the Light Programme. Again, this rather tame choice suggests an organisation inclined to look backwards rather than move with the times.⁸⁵⁵

It seems likely that the slow demise of Lyons' service industries and the consequent reductions in staff numbers clearly had an impact on the ability to maintain company-based recreational provision at the levels it had reached between the 1930s and the 1950s. This may explain the significantly reduced coverage of these activities in *The Lyons Mail* in the 1960s. It is also possible that this reduced coverage reflected reduced commitment on the part of the company as employees were now much more inclined to want to spend their leisure time at home or engaged in activities quite unconnected with the workplace. Reports of social activities increasingly suggested that an attempt was being made to engage with workers and their families, especially at Christmas. The party for children of staff at the Cumberland Hotel in 1960 seems typical. Here 170 boys and girls were

⁸⁵⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, February 1964, p. 11.

⁸⁵⁵ *The Times*, 31 October 1950, p.7.

entertained with clowns, singing and games followed by a 'feast of jellies and ices'. At the end of the event a telegram message from one of the firm's directors was read out, conveying his good wishes to the assembled adults and children.⁸⁵⁶ It was a vestigial trace of the corporate paternalism which had once inspired the Glucksteins and the Salmons to take the path of industrial welfare. Families were very much in evidence in coverage of a Gala Day in 1966. Photographs of the event on the front cover of the *Mail* feature families enjoying the fun of the fair; the employee's name and department are noted in the caption.⁸⁵⁷ It might be argued that such events were designed to ensure that Lyons workers and their families embraced the company's values and traditions. It is more likely that it represented recognition that employees' priorities – especially when it came to how they spent their spare time - were more likely to be decided at home than at work.

Conclusions

In many respects, the history of sports and social provision at J. Lyons & Co resembled that provided by Raleigh, Robinsons and the Bank of England. Members of the Gluckstein and Salmon families on the board of the company were committed to the idea of industrial welfare and demonstrated this commitment through investment in a range of facilities at Linden House, in the West End, at Cadby Hall, Greenford and Sudbury Hill. They also showed their support in a more personal way offering words of congratulation as they presented awards at the various set-piece occasions which sports and social activities generated and offering words of encouragement in *The Lyons Mail*. With Lyons employing 35,000 people by 1939 it offered the owners a way of connecting with a widely dispersed workforce whose

⁸⁵⁶ LMA, ACC/3527/297, *The Lyons Mail*, February 1961, p. 8.

⁸⁵⁷ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, New Series 61, June 1966, Front Page.

places of work varied from factory to a tea-shop. They were able to promote the idea that Lyons was a family company, tempering what appears to have been, in the 1920s at least, a fairly robust industrial relations policy with an element of paternalism.

The history of works-based recreation at Lyons followed a similar pattern of development to that witnessed at major industrial employers, like Raleigh and Robinsons, and at the Bank of England. Although some elements of an industrial welfare strategy were in place before the First World War – *The Lyons Mail* magazine and the Lyons Athletic Club were both started in 1913 – the sports and social provision at Lyons developed most rapidly in the interwar years, coinciding with the expansion of the numbers employed. The period 1945 – 1970 saw the company's commitment to the sports and social aspects of industrial welfare maintained at pre-war levels until the 1960s by which time Lyons was experiencing problems in adjusting to the demands of a new era in which the forms of mass catering that it had pioneered had become unfashionable. As restaurants and teashops closed down and numbers employed declined the commitment to works-based industrial recreation began to falter. It certainly received less coverage in *The Lyons Mail*.

In respect of one of the key questions posed in the introduction regarding the protocols of industrial welfare, the Lyons case study supports the idea that shop-floor – or teashop-floor initiatives were the key to establishing clubs and societies. The oldest sports club at Lyons was the swimming section, founded by a group of workers in 1897; over the years activities ranging from the Rifle Club to Ladies Keep-Fit, Old-time Dancing and the 'Souflettes' football team, followed a similar pattern – an initial spark of interest in the workforce, kept alive by helpful publicity in the company magazine and sustained thereafter by the structures of logistical support set up by management, not least the sports and social

facilities in which they invested significant amounts of the company's capital. High-profile set-piece occasions, however, such as the Big Bang Carnivals, do seem to have required a more top-down approach, not least on account of their lavish scale. Arguably, as they were big enough to capture the attention of *The Times* and other newspapers it was important for the company to ensure that they were successful and generated the right kind of publicity.

Lyons differed from the other business houses covered in earlier chapters in two important respects. Firstly, it employed a very high proportion of females. Glucksmann has suggested that 90 per cent of the workforce in 1939 were women; in particular departments – teashops and restaurants especially – almost all the staff were women.⁸⁵⁸ With women less likely to take up sport than men, this meant that the social side of industrial welfare at Lyons was likely to have been of particular importance to them, but there is little sign of women's requirements being specifically addressed by the company on a systematic basis. Lyons, however, were very astute when it came to using its female staff to generate favourable publicity and this ensured, for example, that women's sports activities that generated what would now be called photo-opportunities were assiduously exploited, as with the women's tug-of-war team. The extent to which this impacted on recruitment and retention is an open question though the fact that Lyons could dip into a deep reservoir of unskilled, low-paid, female labour to staff its teashops and restaurants meant that relatively high turnover was not a major problem. This may help to explain why, sport aside, the social provision for women remained relatively undeveloped.

⁸⁵⁸ Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p. 124.

Lyons also differed from the other firms covered here in that its workers were so widely dispersed – some in large units, such as the factories at Cadby Hall and Greenford; some in medium-sized units, such as the West End hotels or restaurants; some in teashops. This often posed logistical problems – especially as the hours of work varied so much from location to location – and this meant that there was a greater emphasis at Lyons than elsewhere on the department – for instance, the particular restaurant or hotel one worked at – in organising sports and social activities. The Cumberland Hotel could raise its own rugby XV, for example, and the Coventry Street Corner House could organise its own variety show. Interdepartmental sports were very prominent at Lyons. It is possible that this made it easier for workers to identify with their particular workplace rather than the company that owned it; alternatively, workers may have identified with their employer through the experience of bonding with those with whom and for whom they worked day by day. Overall, there is little evidence to suggest that the sports and social provision was a critical factor when a decision was made to apply for a job at Lyons; financial, logistical and personal reasons were probably more important. It did no harm, however, to have a reputation as a good employer with sports facilities good enough to host Olympic competition in 1948.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁹ Sudbury Hill hosted nine hockey matches at the London Olympic Games of 1948. See M. Polley, *The British Olympics: Britain's Olympic Heritage 1612-2012* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2011), p. 181.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Far from being on the periphery, provision for sport and other recreational activities formed an integral part of the industrial welfare strategies adopted by many large-scale employers in England from the 1920s through to the 1970s. In this sense this thesis broadly endorses the conclusions of other historians who have explored this field and whose work has been surveyed in the introduction.⁸⁶⁰ Provision of this kind, as we have seen, helped to define relations between employers and employees over a period in which the owner paternalism of the late Victorian and Edwardian period gave way to a more formal commitment to industrial welfare after the First World War, with the Industrial Welfare Society (IWS), from 1919 onwards, providing an important lead. Whilst participation levels varied from place to place and from time to time, works-based leisure provision could touch the lives of a significant proportion of the workforce through participation in sport, membership of a society in which a particular interest could be pursued, or on a more *ad hoc* basis by taking advantage of the facilities provided by the firm to play cards or darts and enjoy a pint at the works social club. The availability of such opportunities helped to define the way in which a

⁸⁶⁰ See especially pp.22-37.

company was regarded by its employees. It also provided an indication of how those who owned and managed the company wanted to be regarded. Company sports facilities and amateur dramatic societies, not to mention works outings and Christmas parties, were a way of signalling that an employer was 'modern' or 'progressive'.

Historians to date have generally explored the development of sports and social activities within the particular context of companies located *either* in manufacturing *or* in the service sector. The four case studies explored here – two from manufacturing (Robinsons and Raleigh), one from a service industry which incorporated elements of manufacturing (Lyons) and one non-manufacturing service-sector employer (The Bank of England) – make it possible to draw some comparisons across sectors while, at the same time, emphasising the ways in which provision could be shaped by the particular circumstances of an organisation, each of which had its own history, culture, custom and practice. What is striking, in the first instance, is the strength of commitment to sports and recreational provision in large-scale organisations across all sectors. The four workplaces investigated here have much in common, not least in that they all experienced expansion in the provision of works-related recreational provision in the inter-war period with employers often making significant investment in this area, notably by committing funds to the purchase of land and the development and maintenance of sports facilities. At a time when large-scale organisations were increasingly concerned with problems associated with individual anomie and the breakdown of identity, sports and social provision offered a way of forging 'common corporate identity' and finding common ground on which employer and

employee could meet.⁸⁶¹ Not that all works-based recreation needed expensive facilities. Some merely required somewhere to meet; canteens and rest rooms often served a dual purpose in this respect. Making facilities available to workers, especially as a response to requests from below, was a way in which management could demonstrate goodwill and help to foster a benign climate of industrial relations.

Whereas most historical studies of works sports and social activities to date have focused on the nineteenth century or the period up to 1939, this thesis has carried the story forward into the post-Second World War years. The framework provided by the longer period is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it helps to demonstrate elements of continuity within the four case studies. Very often the works-based clubs and societies that were initiated in the 1920s and 1930s formed the basis of recreational activity that continued into the 1950s and 1960s. Secondly, the half-century, beginning in c.1918 and traversing the disruption of the Second World War, when some sports and social activities were abandoned or curtailed, provides for a clearer view of the long-term development of these aspects of industrial welfare. Thirdly, the post-war period, from the mid-1940s through to 1970, is important in itself. Evidence derived from company literature and oral testimony confirms a continuing high level of commitment to works-based recreation of all kinds from senior management as well as from those on the shop-floor. As far as the IWS was concerned, it still had an important part to play in industrial welfare through helping workers to identify with the organisations that employed them. In 1950, for example, the *Journal of Industrial Welfare & Personnel Management* gave generous and sympathetic coverage to a recent sports meeting held at Bournville when over a thousand competitors

⁸⁶¹ M. Heller, 'British Company Magazines, 1878-1939: the Origins and Functions of House Journals in Large-Scale Organisations', *Media History*, 15 (2), (2009), 153.

representing different firms took part in over a hundred events. There had even been an Olympic-style opening ceremony where the various works teams had paraded their banners.⁸⁶² The symbolic significance of such occasions, when workers were invited - individually and collectively - to express a sense of identity with their firm, was an important aspect of the strategies favoured by the IWS and progressive companies. Christmas parties and annual outings to the seaside continued to fulfil a similar function through to the end of the period under consideration here.

Much of the evidence cited has been culled from various company magazines and this thesis endorses the importance that has been attached to these staples of corporate propaganda, especially by Michael Heller. It is appropriate, therefore, in these concluding remarks, to reflect further on the function of these in-house publications and the ways in which they dovetailed with workplace-based sports and social provision. What has been demonstrated here is that the expansion of organised leisure centred on the workplace often developed in tandem with the company magazine. Three of the four firms under review began publishing their magazines just after the end of the Great War, just as their sports clubs and recreational societies were beginning to take off. One of the principal functions of company magazines, especially noticeable in the inter-war and immediate post-war periods, was to report on the ever-expanding range of clubs and societies. *The Lyons Mail*, as we have seen, was also 'The Official Organ of Lyons' Athletic Club'. The house magazine acted both as a notice-board, helping fledgling clubs and societies to get off the ground and sustaining them thereafter by providing a point of reference where those participating or wishing to participate in activities could check dates, fixture lists, venues etc

⁸⁶² Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick [MRC]: Industrial Welfare Society archive, MSS.303/B19/1/32, *Journal of Industrial Welfare & Personnel Management*, July/August 1950, 121

or make contact with named club officials. In effect, company magazines advertised the facilities and opportunities on offer thus helping to maximise participation. Mundane details repeated month after month also served to flag the image of Robinsons, Raleigh, Lyons and the Bank as 'good' employers and to promote the management's preferred version of the corporate culture. All the magazines surveyed here are replete with rhetoric pertaining to teamwork, pride, family and togetherness, messages that could be underlined by references to a successful works football or netball team, the annual flower show or an enjoyable company outing. It was a mild form of company propaganda the impact of which is difficult to measure but its effectiveness was enhanced by the fact that so much of the content relating to sports and social activities was supplied by employees in the form of copy submitted by the secretaries of various clubs and societies.

This is not to say that magazines produced by firms which were targeted at their own employees should not be viewed critically. Generally, the accent was on the positive rather than the negative. Though section leaders and club secretaries sometimes griped in their published reports about lack of support for particular activities, effectively pointing the finger of blame at those members of the workforce who showed little enthusiasm for what was on offer or who perhaps preferred to pursue leisure opportunities elsewhere, owners and senior managers were exempt from criticism. On the sports and social pages of company magazines the emphasis was very much on 'thanks' and 'gratitude' to senior management for continued support. It has been suggested that company magazines were 'instruments of managerial power' utilised to combat trade union militancy and designed to persuade workers to identify with their company rather than their class. There is no evidence from the four case studies examined here to suggest that sports and social

provision was a direct response to the threat of trade union militancy, though clearly there were perceived advantages in industrial relations terms in being regarded as a good and generous employer. Meanwhile the function of the company magazine was to ensure that employees understood norms, hierarchies, corporate identity and culture.⁸⁶³ Extensive reporting of the sports and social provision in which these were embodied assisted in this process.

Another reason why it is important to consider works-based sport and recreational provision over a long period through to 1970 was that it allows for some consideration of the declining importance of this strand of industrial welfare from the late 1950s onwards. It is noticeable that sports clubs and recreational societies feature less prominently in company magazines towards the end of the period under consideration. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was able to claim with some justification in 1957 that most British people had 'never had it so good' and this signalled that the conditions which had helped to make sports and social activities attractive to employers and employees from the 1920s through to the mid-1950s were disappearing. Affluence meant that leisure opportunities that might have seemed attractive to workers in the inter-war period now had less appeal, not least because there was more opportunity to exercise choice. By the 1960s workers could use their non-working hours to access a wider range of activities away from the workplace, in part because so many were buying their own homes and driving their own cars. In particular, young workers – at one time the backbone of sports clubs and works-based social activities where they could hope to meet members of the opposite sex – increasingly found other ways to spend their leisure time. *A Report on a Survey of the Readership of the Lyons Mail* (1962) was especially significant in this respect. A sample of 400 employees across the

⁸⁶³ Heller, 'Company Magazines', 159-160.

company established that *The Lyons Mail* reached all but seven per cent of the workforce. Of most interest, however, was the conclusion drawn as to which staff were more likely to read it. Significantly, there was a strong correlation between readership and age and longevity of service. Staff who had been with the firm for five or more years were most likely to read *The Lyons Mail*.⁸⁶⁴ The editors tended to encourage this tendency by referring increasingly to sports and social activities that had taken place some years before or by publishing old photographs. Image 5:1 below, from the April 1964 edition of *The Lyons Mail* under the heading 'STILL GOING STRONG', featured the box department's outing of 1938 and the accompanying text noted that thirteen of the group still worked for the company.⁸⁶⁵ While this may have been very gratifying for all concerned it effectively located the kind of activity depicted as belonging to the past and of little relevance to younger workers. The underlying message was that the sports and social side was not 'still going strong', or at least, that it was weaker than it had been in the inter-war period. It suggests that the industrial welfare strategies that had served companies well through to the 1950s were becoming less effective.

⁸⁶⁴ LMA, ACC/3527/206, J. Lyons & Co. Ltd, *Report on a Survey of the Readership of the Lyons Mail*, 1962.

⁸⁶⁵ LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1964, p.2.



5:1: Box Department Outing, 1938.

Source: LMA, ACC/3527/299, *The Lyons Mail*, April 1964, p.2.

It can be argued, however, that the approach adopted here – with four case studies spanning both manufacturing and service sectors – has made it possible to move our understanding of the history of works-based sport and recreation forward in some important ways. There were, for example, important similarities and differences in the way that Robinsons, Raleigh, Lyons and the Bank went about their business in this respect. Each organisation was prepared to undertake significant investment in this area – not least in providing sports grounds and other facilities – which in itself suggests that across both sectors there was a commitment to this aspect of industrial welfare. While generally content to let workers run the various clubs and societies, company chairmen, directors and senior management found themselves lending support as honorary presidents or vice-presidents and demonstrating the caring face of the company by appearing in person at sports days and other events. Sometimes their wives would also be involved, providing a symbolic underpinning of the message that the firm was a kind of extended family.

Company magazines are littered with images and text devoted to awards ceremonies where words of encouragement and congratulations from those at the top would almost always be followed by words of appreciation and gratitude from those below. In this way the existing power structures within the organisations were reinforced. As Michael Heller has argued, 'the provision of sport played an important role in the fostering of labour relations, the creation of corporate identity and reinforced and legitimized power relations within the company'.⁸⁶⁶ This clearly applied across all the case studies examined here.

However, there were some significant variations from company to company. Each of the organisations researched here, while following similar pathways, did not approach industrial welfare in exactly the same way. The old-style owner paternalism often associated with Victorian family businesses, was still very much in evidence at Robinson & Sons Ltd where members of the Robinson family were a pivotal and highly-visible presence throughout the period under question both at the workplace and also in and around the town of Chesterfield, their civic role underpinning their authority as employers. The fact that Robinsons was based in a relatively small town was important here. Raleigh (Nottingham), Lyons and the Bank of England (London) were based in large cities and, therefore, their workforces had relatively easy access to a wider range of sporting and recreational activities than was available in Chesterfield. Thus their employees had access to a wider leisure market and were less reliant on what their employer provided for them. Why, for example, would a Bank of England employee, commuting from, for example, South-East Essex to work at Threadneedle Street want to travel all the way to Roehampton, on the other side of London, to use sports facilities that could have been accessed nearer

⁸⁶⁶ M. Heller, 'Sport, Bureaucracies and London Clerks 1880-1939', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (2), (2008), 606.

home courtesy of the local council or a private provider? The lavish facilities provided by Raleigh, Lyons and the Bank may simply be explained by the fact that they were larger organisations than Robinsons but the fact that they had to compete against other providers in the leisure market may also have been a factor.

Location and the extent to which the workforce was concentrated or dispersed were important. As we have noted, several generations of the Robinson family served as mayors of Chesterfield, indicating that the family held significant sway in the local community. Relations were further cemented when the firm donated land to the town for recreational purposes and provided housing for some of their workers. The sports and recreational facilities that they provided and the fact that members of the Robinson family, especially Florence Robinson, were active participants helped to ensure that the owners were familiar rather than remote figures as far as the workers were concerned. Playing for one of Robinsons' works teams or taking part in one of the Operatic Society's productions made it easier for workers, if they were so inclined, to buy into the idea of Robinsons as a 'family' concern of which they were part. In contrast, whilst *The Lyons Mail* could point to the Salmon and Gluckstein families taking a keen interest in the recreational welfare of their workforce, theirs was an organisation that employed vast numbers of workers spread across one of the world's largest cities. In this respect the intimacy that was evident at Robinsons was distinctly less so at Lyons. The wider dispersal of Lyons workforce made it difficult to replicate the cosy inclusiveness of Robinsons no matter how often the Glucksteins or the Salmons appeared at awards evenings and annual dances. It also meant that sports and social activities at Lyons, of all the firms surveyed here, were most likely to be organised

around particular workplaces – the Coventry Street Corner House or the Cumberland Hotel, for example.

At the Bank of England the sport and recreation on offer was shaped in other ways, notably by the class profile of its employees. It seems unlikely that the Bank's Court of Directors was influenced by the ideas of the IWS, except perhaps in relation to the printing works. Family paternalism was not relevant here though it was important to give a clear signal that the Bank looked after its employees and could provide facilities that matched those of other major financial sector employers, such as the clearing banks or the major insurance companies. Inviting workers to participate in the sports and social provision at the Bank was more like offering access to a fairly exclusive club or clubs – as there were separate men's and women's clubs till the end of our period - with excellent facilities and the company of colleagues from the same social background. At the Bank, the activities available tended to reflect the interests of a workforce that was more middle-class in composition than at Robinsons, Raleigh or Lyons, and also better educated. It is significant that rugby union – generally a middle-class game in England – and equestrianism featured prominently at Roehampton. There was also an Arts and Literary Society which serviced distinctly 'highbrow' tastes. This impression was reinforced by the content of *The Old Lady* which carried articles of a kind not found in any of the other company magazines surveyed. Articles on the African Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century and book reviews that included *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini* indicate a workforce with rather different interests to those who read *Raligram* or *The Lyons Mail*. In 1967, a report on the Bank's football association opened with the words: “*Quand on n'a pas ce que l'on aime, il faut aimer ce que l'on a,*” as

the Comte de Bussy-Rabutin so rightly observed'.⁸⁶⁷ Thus *The Old Lady* has a different tone to its counterparts in manufacturing where the house magazines reflect a distinctly working-men's club image with the emphasis on football, variety shows, beauty contests and outings to the seaside. Nevertheless, in general, the range of recreational activities at the Bank of England was consistent with the three other workplaces, particularly when it came to sport where football, cricket, hockey, athletics, tennis, golf, snooker and darts were mainstays of sports and social club activity.

A similar scenario is evident in the works-based provision for women across both the manufacturing and service sectors where the steadily rising numbers of female workers – unmarried women between the wars and then increasingly married women in the post Second World War years – were being exposed to a growing range of sport and recreational pursuits. Overall, however, provision for women was less extensive than for their male counterparts, particularly in the manufacturing firms where men predominated at both management and shop-floor level. The situation was different at Lyons where catering and service roles were overwhelmingly the domain of young female workers. Here, especially during the interwar period and the immediate post-war years, when Lyons' corner houses, teashops, restaurants and hotels were flourishing, it is noticeable that women's sport's activity, for example, was featured prominently in the company magazine. It has to be said that the nature of the coverage was often patronising, reflecting attitudes in society more generally at the time, but also indicative of the way women were regarded at Lyons, the 'nippies' especially. At the start of the period comments about the inability of women to play football were typical; by the 1960s *Lyons Mail's* female readership was being

⁸⁶⁷ BoE, *The Old Lady*, March 1950, pp. 362-365; December 1967, p. 265. This translates as 'When you can't have what you like it's necessary to like what you have'.

entertained by articles on cookery, fashion and home décor; arguably a different way of making the same point. Significantly, where women were assigned an active role in the sports and social provision related to industrial welfare this was often portrayed as maternal. Simon Phillips has made this point in relation to Florence Boot.⁸⁶⁸ It could equally apply in the case studies examined here to Miss Jenkins at Raleigh and the female employees for whose welfare she was responsible ('Miss Jenkins' Girls') and especially to Florence Robinson, who took the young workers at the family firm under her maternal wing.

One way in which this thesis makes a distinctive contribution to our understanding of the sports and social side of working life in twentieth century Britain is by emphasising the importance of social activities, especially those linked to hobbies. Arguably, sport has a higher visibility but it is best viewed as part of a wider spectrum of activities encouraged by companies and pursued by employees within the broad framework of industrial welfare. Previous accounts have tended to over-emphasise the importance of sport – perhaps because providing facilities represented such a significant financial commitment for employers – leaving other activities somewhat under-represented. Angling, bridge, cage birds, chess, dancing, debating, drama, horticulture, motoring, music, photography, reading - a huge range of interests and activities need to find their place in any account of workplace-based recreation. These non-sporting activities, though often no less competitive in their own fashion than football or cricket, were especially important in blurring boundaries between work and home; the vegetables grown in the back garden, for instance, becoming exhibits at the annual horticultural show. A 1969 government survey revealed that 52 per cent of men's leisure time and 57 per cent of women's was spent on home-

⁸⁶⁸ S. Phillips, 'Industrial Welfare and Recreation at the Boots Pure Drug Company 1883-1945', (PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2003), p. 356.

based activities.⁸⁶⁹ The extent to which employers could engage with employees in this area seems to be especially important. In the context of the history of industrial welfare narrow sports-based definitions of recreation need rethinking. It is clear from the four case studies examined here that employers took non-sporting activities seriously and so should historians of workplace-based recreation.

Social activities and hobby-based clubs – whether the attraction was cage birds, chess, debating or horticulture – offered workers the companionship of shared interests and sometimes practical advantages, such as access to discounts negotiated with suppliers of fishing tackle or gardening supplies. They were particularly important within the spectrum of sports and social provision because, as well as appealing to different grades of worker, they also appealed to all age groups. In most cases active membership of a football club, for example, would cease when a player reached his or her late twenties or thirties, or perhaps when they married. This did not apply in the same way to activities such as angling, gardening, photography or music. Here, age was no barrier as physical agility was less important. These activities were just as if not more important than sport in creating affective bonds linking employees to their workplace even beyond working years into retirement. In addition, such clubs encouraged socializing and cross-departmental contacts. Conversations could take place easily in the factory, over the desk and in the shop just as much as in the club-house or sports bar. An advantage as far as management was concerned was that these clubs and societies needed very little in the way of facilities and consequently were significantly less of a financial burden. They could also be beneficial to

⁸⁶⁹ S. Constantine, 'Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Journal of Social History*, 14 (3), (1981), 387.

the firm as a form of positive advertisement. Horticultural shows, drama productions, photographic exhibitions could advertise the firm very effectively – possibly just as effectively as a successful works football team - in the local and regional community, confirming its reputation as a good employer.

These routine, week-by-week activities dovetailed with showpiece events, such as works Christmas parties and annual outings, which came under the broad umbrella of industrial welfare. As we have seen, works outings, especially in the manufacturing sector, were often huge events requiring military-style planning. There was a public relations dimension to such events that was important both in terms of internal and external consumption. The Raleigh outing in 1949, when copies of the *Nottingham Evening News*, carrying reports and photographs of the big day out, were flown up to Blackpool so that the workers could read about themselves and the company which had treated them so generously while on their way home. It also helped to foster a sense of local and regional identity whereby the firm and its location were alluded to in the same breath. Moreover, events of this type often brought management, executives and shop-floor employees together in a visible display of 'togetherness' that often featured in company literature and reinforced a sense of all the staff 'pulling' in one direction. Works outings can also offer some useful points of comparison between the manufacturing and service sector not least in the fact that many service workers – at Lyons for example - were based at smaller outlets where staff were found in single or double figures rather than in hundreds. Where this applied, outings for individual shops and restaurants were the norm as the closure of multiple outlets was not practical on a number of levels. It might be added that the Bank of England was hardly likely to close for a day in order to make it possible for its employees to

have a day at the seaside, though small-scale club and section outings were not uncommon; these were rather more restrained affairs than Raleigh's day out at Blackpool.

Finally, and this point arises directly from a wider definition of workplace-based recreational activities, it is important to re-emphasise that clubs, societies, sports teams and other manifestations of industrial welfare often had their origins among the workers themselves. The overarching theory of industrial welfare notwithstanding, the initiative often came from the shop floor or the office when workers realised that they had an interest in common that they wished to pursue. Though management was often approached at a later stage there was a degree of autonomy here that we should not underestimate. Membership of a club or society in the workplace was, therefore, not necessarily an indication of loyalty to the firm in the first instance. It has to be recognised, of course, that employers and those who managed the organisations covered here were often quick to adopt these initiatives and glad to see the company's name put on them, thus integrating them into labour relations and recruitment and retention strategies more generally.

Nevertheless, the idea that sport and social provision – as an arm of industrial welfare – was a 'carrot' to attract future workers is not borne out in this study. Oral testimony has suggested that individuals were well aware of the excellent sport and recreational facilities on offer at their respective workplace but, as in the case of Raleigh, good facilities were no more than was expected at a large employer. Even at the Bank of England, where facilities were of the very highest standard, Barry Hoffmann could only state that it 'possibly' helped in recruitment.⁸⁷⁰ The influence of family and friends, location and

⁸⁷⁰ Barry Hoffmann Interview.

financial rewards were more likely to act as a 'pull' as to where an individual worked. It seems likely, however, that sporting and recreational provision may have helped with staff retention. For some workers, at least, attachments to sports and social clubs and the companionship that this embodied made it more rather than less likely that they would stay with a particular employer, though it was not likely to be the most decisive factor in making that decision. Research for this thesis have identified a number of workers for whom being part of a works-club was something to take pride in especially when it had been formed by themselves and their colleagues or workmates. The testimony of these long-term employees lends weight to the argument that this helped them to identify with the organisation for which they worked. The bond that was created through association with sports organisations and social clubs over long periods of time at the workplace meant that for some workers loyalty to their club was an extension of their commitment to the firm. In this scenario then it is not difficult to see why employers across both sectors were happy to sponsor the sports and social side of industrial welfare and also to encourage and respond positively to shop-floor initiatives in this area. Finding 'common ground', where the interests of workers, management and owners were in alignment, could prove beneficial to all concerned. Exploring the history of this strategically-important area, where 'top-down' meets "bottom-up', opens up possibilities for further research.

In summary, previous studies that have addressed the place of sport and recreational provision in the workplace have provided an important platform on which to build. They were clearly an important part of industrial welfare strategies over the period from the end of the First World War through to the 1970s and were to be found in both the manufacturing and the service sectors of the economy. Thus many thousands of employees

were exposed to the sports and social side of industrial welfare and many responded to it in a positive fashion, though a degree of self-interest or instrumentalism was sometimes apparent. The evidence derived from the four case studies presented here suggest that the commitment of directors and senior managers to the provision of sporting and other recreational opportunities was made evident in a number of ways – firstly, through being prepared to commit funds to purchase, develop and maintain sports fields and social clubs; secondly, through their appearances at Christmas parties, football club dinners, horticultural shows and other events which signalled official approval of the range of sports and social activities; and, thirdly, through the editorial content of in-house magazines. The arguments regarding whether or not the provision of work-based recreational opportunities helped with recruitment and retention or whether they helped to foster a benign climate of industrial relations are difficult to prove one way or the other. What is important – and what has been demonstrated in all four case studies, is that senior management were convinced that there were advantages in pursuing industrial welfare strategies of this kind, not least because it was what they thought was expected of a modern and progressive employer. This especially applied when there were other large companies nearby seeking to draw on the same pool of labour. In Nottingham, for example, where Boots and Players provided excellent recreational facilities, it was prudent – no more than good public relations – for Raleigh to adopt a similar strategy. In London, where the major clearing banks were known to have excellent sports facilities, it would have been unthinkable for the Bank of England not to follow their example.

While previous historical studies of works-based welfare provision have tended to focus on a single firm, the four case studies examined here have made it possible to

underline the cross-sector commitment to sports and social activities. There were undoubtedly differences between, for example, Robinsons of Chesterfield, and the Bank of England in London, not least in some of the particular sports and leisure pursuits that were on offer and in the editorial content of their respective company magazines. However, there were also important similarities two of which are very significant though they have been somewhat underplayed in previous accounts. Firstly, it is very important, when studying the history of industrial welfare to recognise that it was not entirely driven by management. As Michael Heller first observed in his work on clerks in the financial sector in the late Victorian and Edwardian era, particular clubs and societies often emerged from employee initiatives in the first instance. Management would then respond by supplying strategic support and encouragement. This could mean providing publicity through a company magazine, making a donation to buy sports clothing or equipment, providing a place where a club could hold meetings on the premises or, at another extreme, buying a sports ground, or building a pavilion or club-house. The research presented here has underlined the importance of this process in the making of industrial welfare across both manufacturing and service sectors and in a variety of employment contexts, whether it was shop-floor workers seeking to establish a football team, or middle managers looking to start an inter-departmental golf tournament. Thus the sports and social side of a company's activities did allow workers to operate with a degree of autonomy and thus help to determine the shape of the recreational package that was eventually offered. Realistically, a club was probably more likely to succeed if it had been formed as a result of a 'bottom up' initiative rather than a 'top-down' directive.

Secondly, this thesis differs from previous historical accounts of industrial welfare policy in Britain in seeking to embrace the full range of activities on offer. Large-scale facilities – playing fields and social clubs – involving significant investment in land and/or bricks and mortar have tended to distort our view of works-based recreation in twentieth-century Britain. Crucially, they have diverted attention away from the various hobby-based clubs and societies that were a major feature of each of the organisations examined in this thesis. Camera clubs, chess clubs, gardening clubs and horticultural societies – not to mention amateur dramatics and light opera – were vital components of industrial welfare provision, at least as important as football and netball teams, even though they were likely to feature less often in the local press. Employers appear to have been delighted to sponsor such activities, and for very good reasons. Arguably, the teamwork involved in producing an annual pantomime was at least as valuable as that required in mounting a successful campaign in a local works football league; a firm's annual flower show – while encouraging workers to cultivate their gardens rather than spend their leisure time in the pub – could be just as valuable in terms of public relations as the works cricket team. Encouraging such activities often required little more than providing facilities for meetings. Moreover, encouraging these forms of rational recreation helped to maximise the reach of company welfare provision in that they appealed to workers of all ages and both sexes in a way that sport often could not. The emphasis here on these activities and the part they played in shaping the corporate culture at Robinsons, Raleigh, Lyons and the Bank deepens our understanding of company-sponsored welfare provision in twentieth-century Britain.

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